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THUNDERBOLTS®

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VOLUME 3

INFINITY

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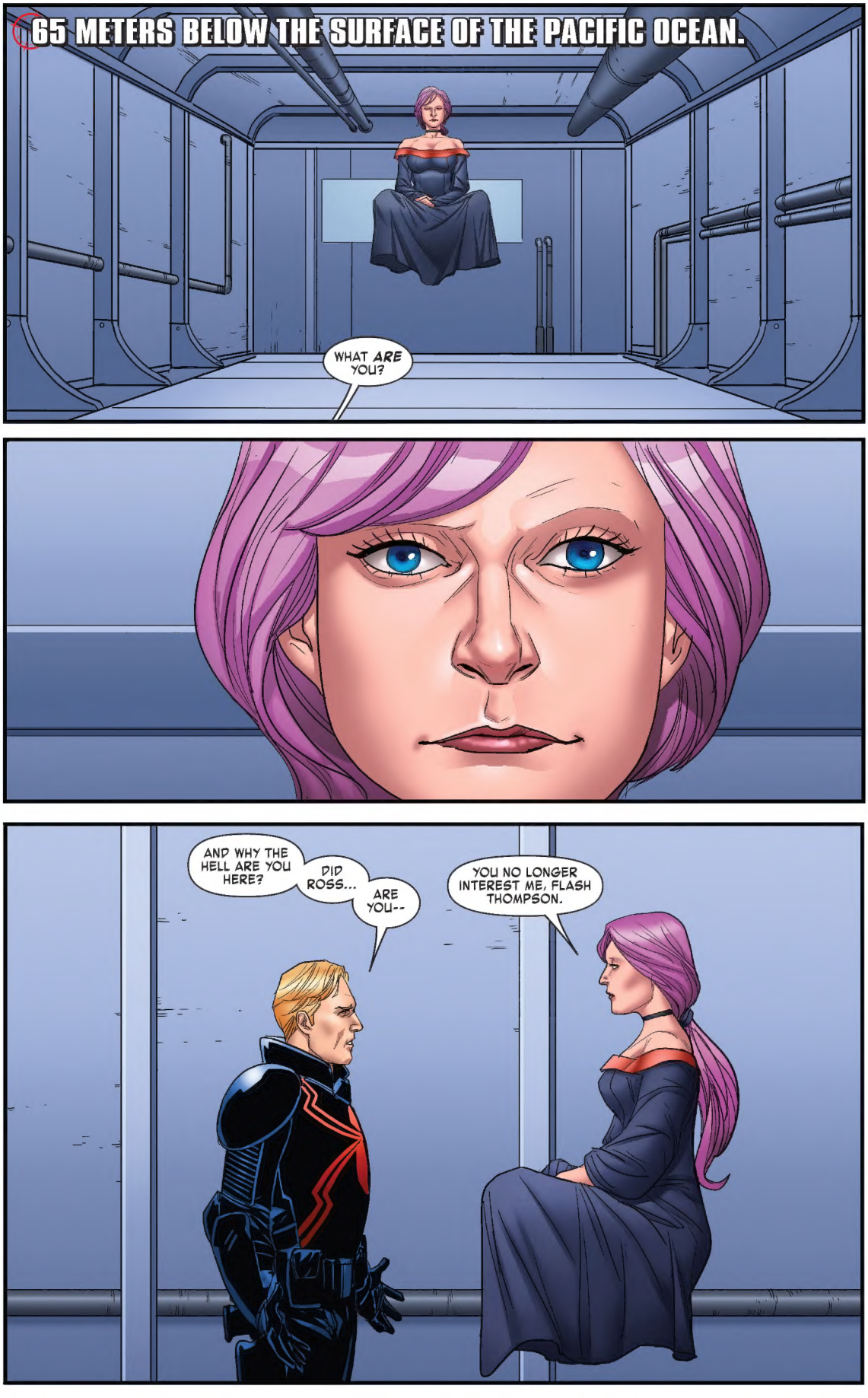
THIRTEEN

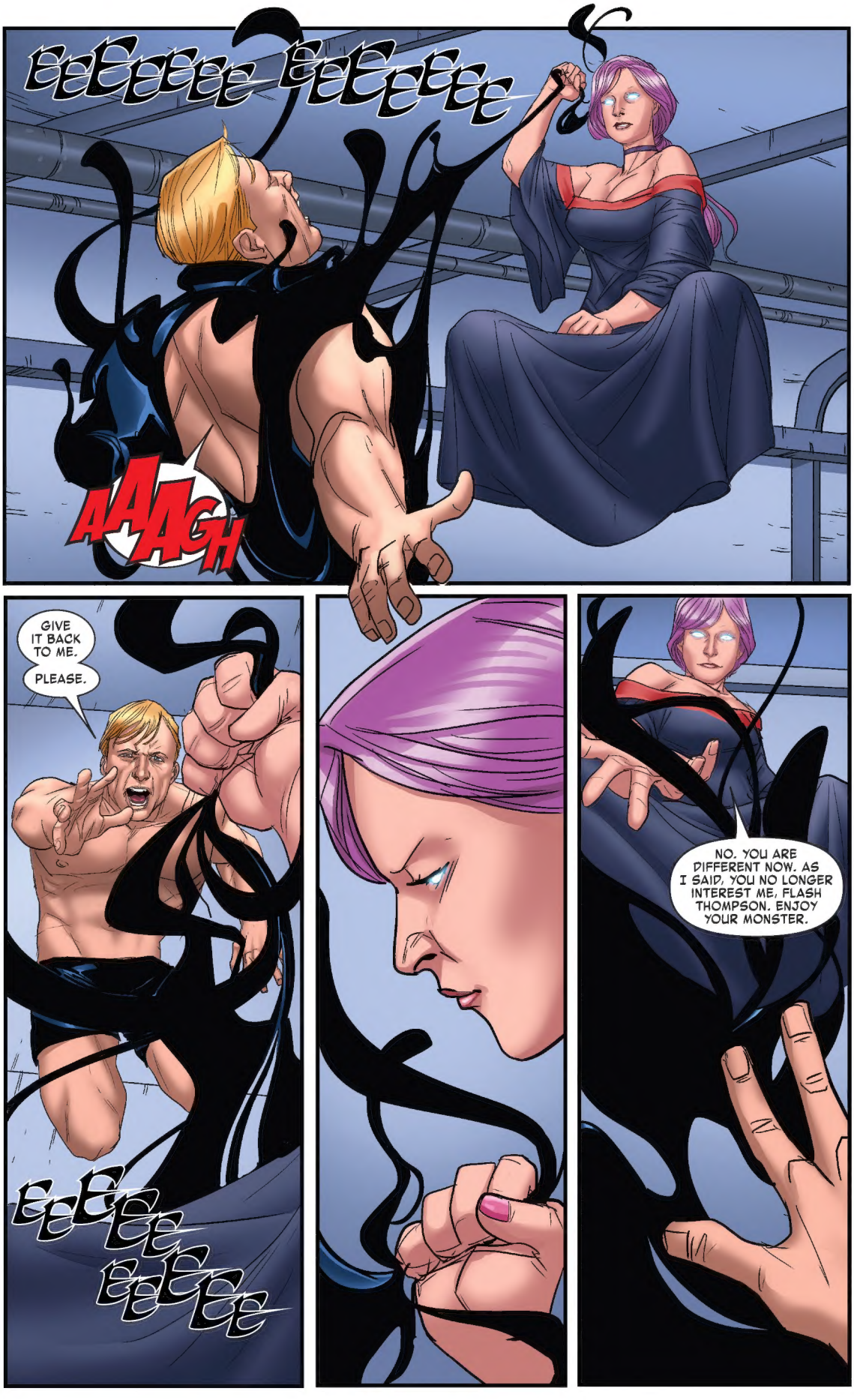
General Thaddeus "Thunderbolt" Ross--The Red Hulk--has assembled a team intent on cutting out the cancer of evil that infects this world. By his side are a handpicked group of like-minded individuals--former loners bound together to accomplish what might have been out of reach on their own. Frank Castle, aka Punisher, vigilante executioner. Flash Thompson, aka Venom, symbiote soldier. Wade Wilson, aka Deadpool, regenerating psychopath. Elektra Natchios, aka Elektra, ninja assassin. Re-powered former gamma-villain genius, Samuel Sterns, aka Red Leader. The mysterious Mercy, angel of death.. Together, they are the...

THUNDERBOLTS

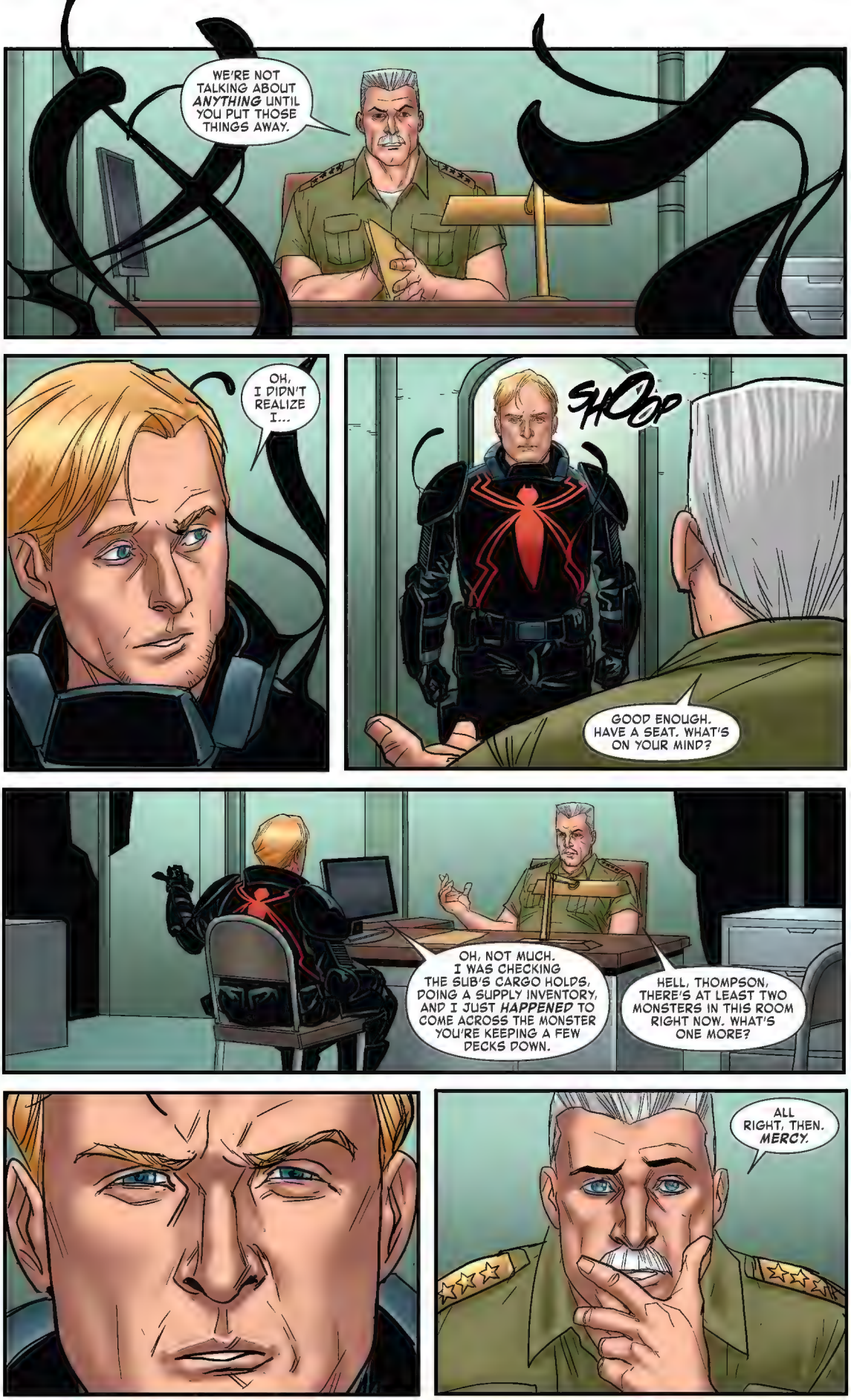
Red Hulk's strike team is full of dangerous people, none more so than the mysterious Mercy. On the team's very first mission in Kata Jaya, Venom witnessed the enigmatic woman massacre a group of rebels seemingly without a thought, or breaking a sweat. Haunted by the memory, and fed up with his team leader's secrecy, Venom is determined to get some answers. Though he may come to regret asking the question...

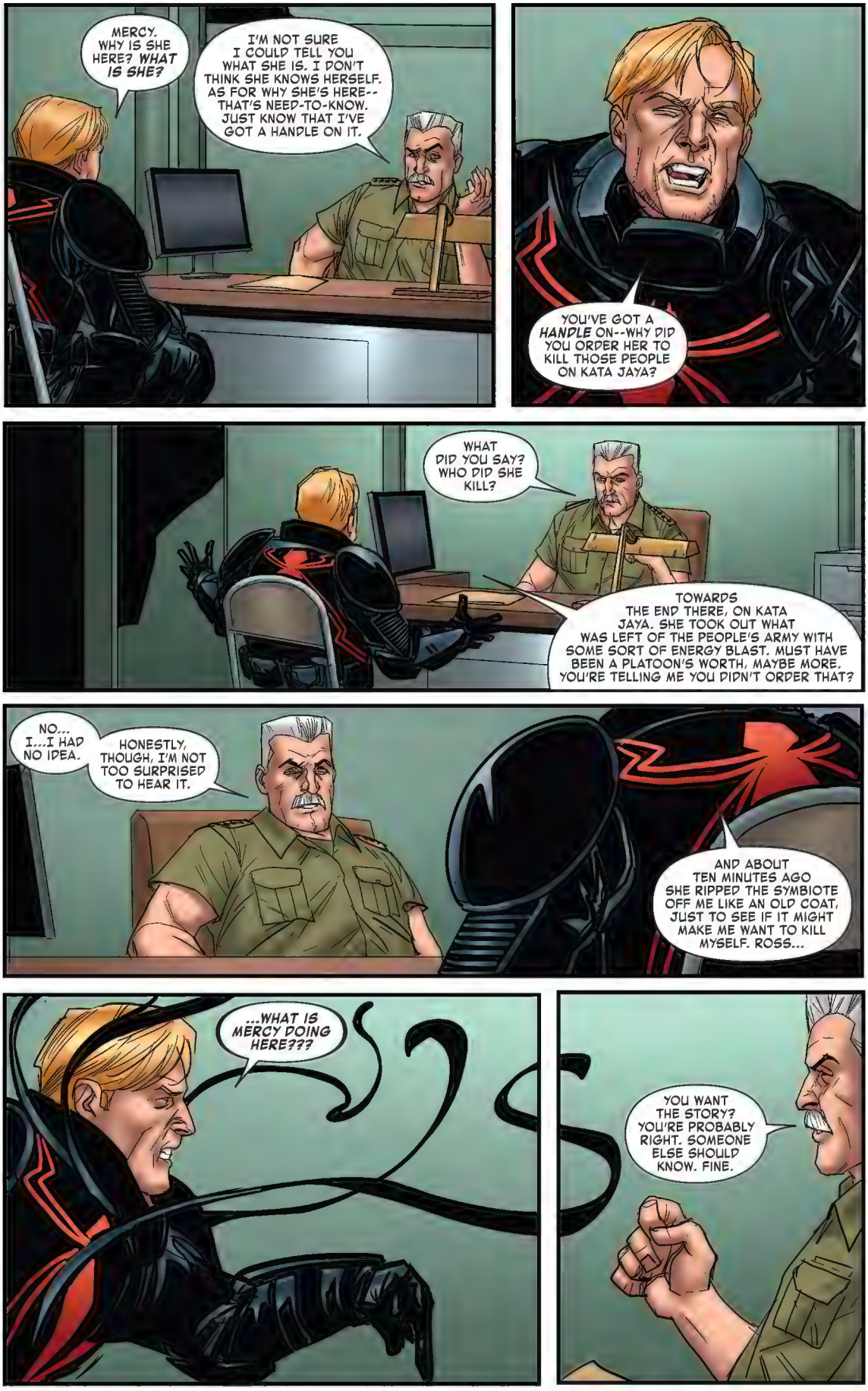

65 METERS BELOW THE SURFACE OF THE PACIFIC OCEAN.
WHAT *ARE* YOU?
AND WHY THE HELL ARE YOU HERE?
DID ROSS...
ARE YOU--
YOU NO LONGER INTEREST ME, FLASH THOMPSON.

I DON'T CARE IF I INTEREST YOU OR NOT. I ASKED YOU WHAT YOU ARE.
MY NAME IS WHAT I AM. I AM MERCY. YOU KNOW THAT, FLASH THOMPSON.
I CAN SEE IT IN YOUR MIND.
"I CAN *SEE* IT.
"YOU *KNEW* WHAT IT WOULD MEAN TO LOSE YOUR LEGS. SO MANY OF YOUR FELLOW SOLDIERS STAGGERING ALONG ON METAL AND PLASTIC LIMBS.
"YOU KNEW YOU WOULD NEVER RUN AGAIN. YOU WOULD FOREVER SIGNIFY DESPAIR AND PAIN TO ANYONE YOU MET."
THAT WAS THE MOMENT. YOU WISHED FOR DEATH TO TAKE YOU AWAY. YOU WISHED FOR ME.
IF I HAD BEEN THERE, I WOULD HAVE TAKEN YOU. I AM SO SORRY TO HAVE FAILED YOU.
ONCE YOU FOUND THIS CREATURE, YOU HAD WHAT YOU NEEDED. AN UGLY SIMULACRUM OF WHAT YOU HAD LOST, PERHAPS, BUT IT WAS ENOUGH.
YOU NO LONGER SOUGHT AN END.
AND SO YOU NO LONGER INTEREST ME, FLASH THOMPSON.
BUT PERHAPS...


EEEEEEE EEEEEEE
AAAGH
GIVE IT BACK TO ME.
PLEASE.
EEEEEEEEEE
NO. YOU ARE DIFFERENT NOW. AS I SAID, YOU NO LONGER INTEREST ME, FLASH THOMPSON. ENJOY YOUR MONSTER.

EASY. EASY.
ENOUGH IS ENOUGH.
THOMPSON! WHAT THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?
WE NEED TO TALK.
NOW.


WE'RE NOT TALKING ABOUT *ANYTHING* UNTIL YOU PUT THOSE THINGS AWAY.
OH, I DIDN'T REALIZE I...
SHOP
GOOD ENOUGH. HAVE A SEAT. WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND?
OH, NOT MUCH. I WAS CHECKING THE SUB'S CARGO HOLDS, DOING A SUPPLY INVENTORY, AND I JUST *HAPPENED* TO COME ACROSS THE MONSTER YOU'RE KEEPING A FEW DECKS DOWN.
HELL, THOMPSON, THERE'S AT LEAST TWO MONSTERS IN THIS ROOM RIGHT NOW. WHAT'S ONE MORE?
ALL RIGHT, THEN. *MERCY.*

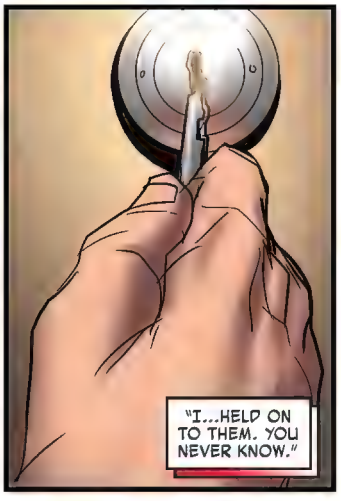

MERCY. WHY IS SHE HERE? WHAT IS SHE?
I'M NOT SURE I COULD TELL YOU WHAT SHE IS. I DON'T THINK SHE KNOWS HERSELF. AS FOR WHY SHE'S HERE--THAT'S NEED-TO-KNOW. JUST KNOW THAT I'VE GOT A HANDLE ON IT.
YOU'VE GOT A HANDLE ON--WHY DID YOU ORDER HER TO KILL THOSE PEOPLE ON KATA JAYA?
WHAT DID YOU SAY? WHO DID SHE KILL?
TOWARDS THE END THERE, ON KATA JAYA. SHE TOOK OUT WHAT WAS LEFT OF THE PEOPLE'S ARMY WITH SOME SORT OF ENERGY BLAST. MUST HAVE BEEN A PLATOON'S WORTH, MAYBE MORE. YOU'RE TELLING ME YOU DIDN'T ORDER THAT?
NO... I...I HAD NO IDEA.
HONESTLY, THOUGH, I'M NOT TOO SURPRISED TO HEAR IT.
AND ABOUT TEN MINUTES AGO SHE RIPPED THE SYMBIOTE OFF ME LIKE AN OLD COAT, JUST TO SEE IF IT MIGHT MAKE ME WANT TO KILL MYSELF. ROSS...
...WHAT IS MERCY DOING HERE???
YOU WANT THE STORY? YOU'RE PROBABLY RIGHT. SOMEONE ELSE SHOULD KNOW. FINE.

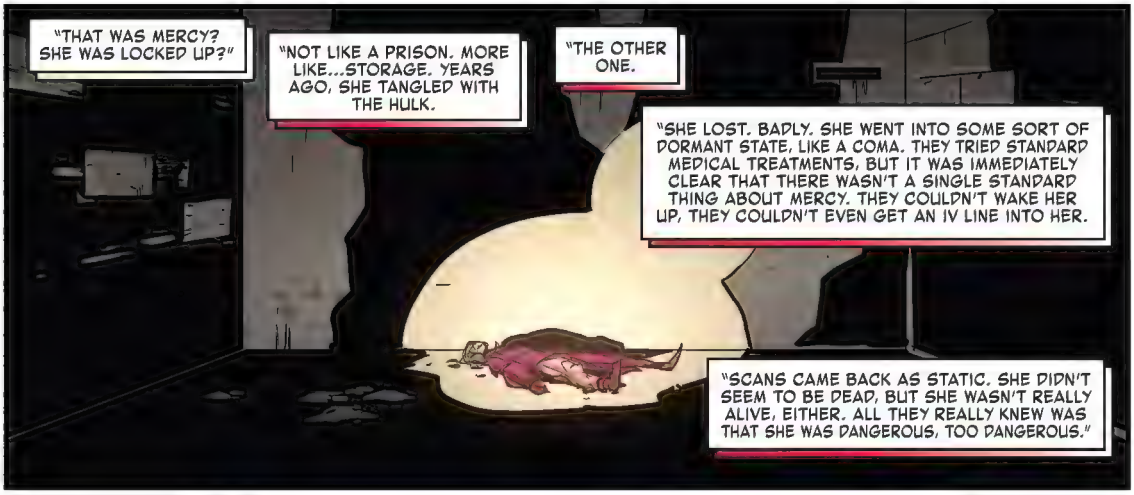
"HERE'S THE STORY."
GYPSUM FLATS TESTING FACILITY.
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE.
DECOMMISSIONED 2004.

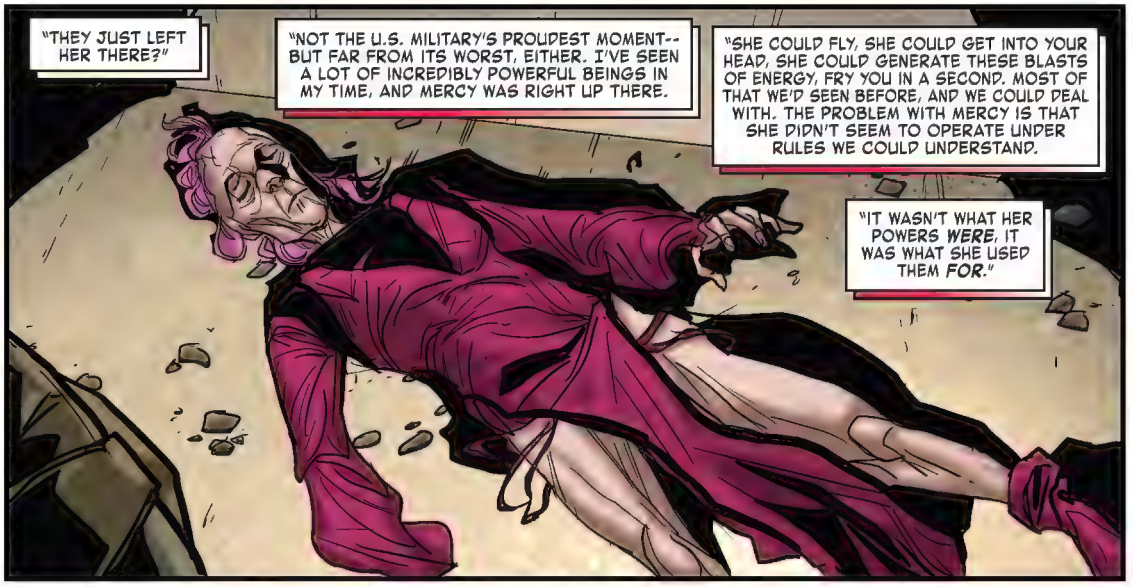
HERE. THIS IS IT.
"YOU EVER SEE ONE OF THOSE TV SHOWS ABOUT...WHAT DO THEY CALL THEM...HOARDERS? PEOPLE WHO CAN'T THROW ANYTHING AWAY, RUIN THEIR LIVES BECAUSE THEY CAN'T TOSS OUT A STACK OF JUNK MAIL. THAT'S THE U.S. MILITARY. IT NEVER LETS ANYTHING GO.

"BUT JUST BECAUSE THEY HAVE SOMETHING DOESN'T MEAN THEY UNDERSTAND IT, OR KNOW WHAT THE HELL TO DO WITH IT.
"WHEN THAT HAPPENS, THEY TEND TO JUST LOCK IT AWAY. AFTER ALL, BETTER *THEY* HAVE IT THAN SOMEONE ELSE. ONLY WAY TO BE SURE SOME OTHER BASTARD WON'T FIGURE OUT HOW TO USE IT AGAINST US.

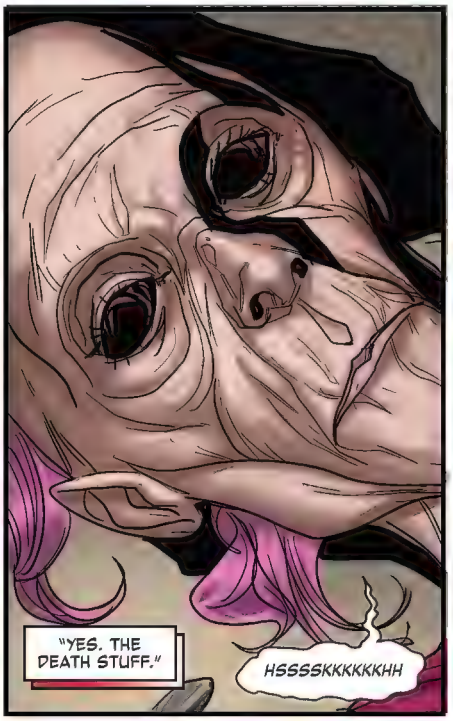
"BUT EVERY TIME YOU LOCK SOMETHING AWAY, THERE'S A KEY.
"IN MY TIME, I CAME ACROSS MY FAIR SHARE OF THOSE KEYS, AND WHEN I COULD...


"I...HELD ON TO THEM. YOU NEVER KNOW."


"THAT WAS MERCY? SHE WAS LOCKED UP?"
"NOT LIKE A PRISON. MORE LIKE...STORAGE. YEARS AGO, SHE TANGLED WITH THE HULK.
"THE OTHER ONE.
"SHE LOST. BADLY. SHE WENT INTO SOME SORT OF DORMANT STATE, LIKE A COMA. THEY TRIED STANDARD MEDICAL TREATMENTS, BUT IT WAS IMMEDIATELY CLEAR THAT THERE WASN'T A SINGLE STANDARD THING ABOUT MERCY. THEY COULDN'T WAKE HER UP, THEY COULDN'T EVEN GET AN IV LINE INTO HER.
"SCANS CAME BACK AS STATIC. SHE DIDN'T SEEM TO BE DEAD, BUT SHE WASN'T REALLY ALIVE, EITHER. ALL THEY REALLY KNEW WAS THAT SHE WAS DANGEROUS, TOO DANGEROUS."


"THEY JUST LEFT HER THERE?"
"NOT THE U.S. MILITARY'S PROUDEST MOMENT--BUT FAR FROM ITS WORST, EITHER. I'VE SEEN A LOT OF INCREDIBLY POWERFUL BEINGS IN MY TIME, AND MERCY WAS RIGHT UP THERE.
"SHE COULD FLY, SHE COULD GET INTO YOUR HEAD, SHE COULD GENERATE THESE BLASTS OF ENERGY, FRY YOU IN A SECOND. MOST OF THAT WE'D SEEN BEFORE, AND WE COULD DEAL WITH. THE PROBLEM WITH MERCY IS THAT SHE DIDN'T SEEM TO OPERATE UNDER RULES WE COULD UNDERSTAND.
"IT WASN'T WHAT HER POWERS *WERE*, IT WAS WHAT SHE USED THEM *FOR*."

"YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT THE DEATH STUFF."


"YES. THE DEATH STUFF."
HSSSSKKKKKKHH

"I WENT IN TO RETRIEVE HER. THIS ALL HAPPENED BEFORE THIS TEAM CAME TOGETHER. BEFORE I WENT THROUGH MY OWN...CHANGES. I HAD A VAGUE IDEA THAT SHE COULD BE A BIG GUN FOR ME--AN UNEXPECTED STRATEGIC ELEMENT.
"THAT WAS THE IDEA, ANYWAY.
"I WENT IN WITH TWO GOOD MEN. CAMPBELL AND HERNANDEZ. SOLDIERS I'D WORKED WITH FOR YEARS. GOOD MEN, WITH FAMILIES.
"I CAME OUT WITH ONE. MERCY TOOK CAMPBELL.
"FOUND OUT LATER CAMPBELL'S WIFE LEFT HIM THE DAY BEFORE. TOOK THE KIDS. HE NEVER SAID A WORD ABOUT IT, JUST SHOWED UP FOR WORK. I KNEW HIM, THOUGH. HIS FAMILY WAS HIS LIFE.
"I GUESS RIGHT THEN, WHEN HE WAS STANDING RIGHT THERE BY MERCY'S...HUSK, I GUESS YOU'D CALL IT...
"...HE WAS READY TO DIE.
"READY ENOUGH FOR MERCY, ANYWAY.
"I COULD HAVE STOPPED HER, MAYBE. I WAS STUNNED. SHOCKED. NO EXCUSE, BUT THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED."
SHE WAS GONE IN AN INSTANT. JUST A LITTLE BLINK--*POOF*--AND HERNANDEZ AND I WERE ALONE DOWN THERE WITH CAMPBELL'S CORPSE.
I DON'T UNDERSTAND. SHE LEFT? SHE'S ON BOARD WITH US.
THE STORY ISN'T OVER.
YOU KNOW THE WHOLE POINT OF THIS TEAM, FROM THE START, WAS TO CLEAN UP MY MISTAKES.
I LET HER OUT.

"I NEEDED TO BRING HER BACK.
THE INDIAN HIMALAYAS.

"I PUT FEELERS OUT, BUT IT TOOK A WHILE TO HEAR ANYTHING. THE WAY MERCY OPERATES, WHAT ARE YOU SUPPOSED TO LOOK FOR? SUICIDES? PEOPLE KILL THEMSELVES EVERY DAY.

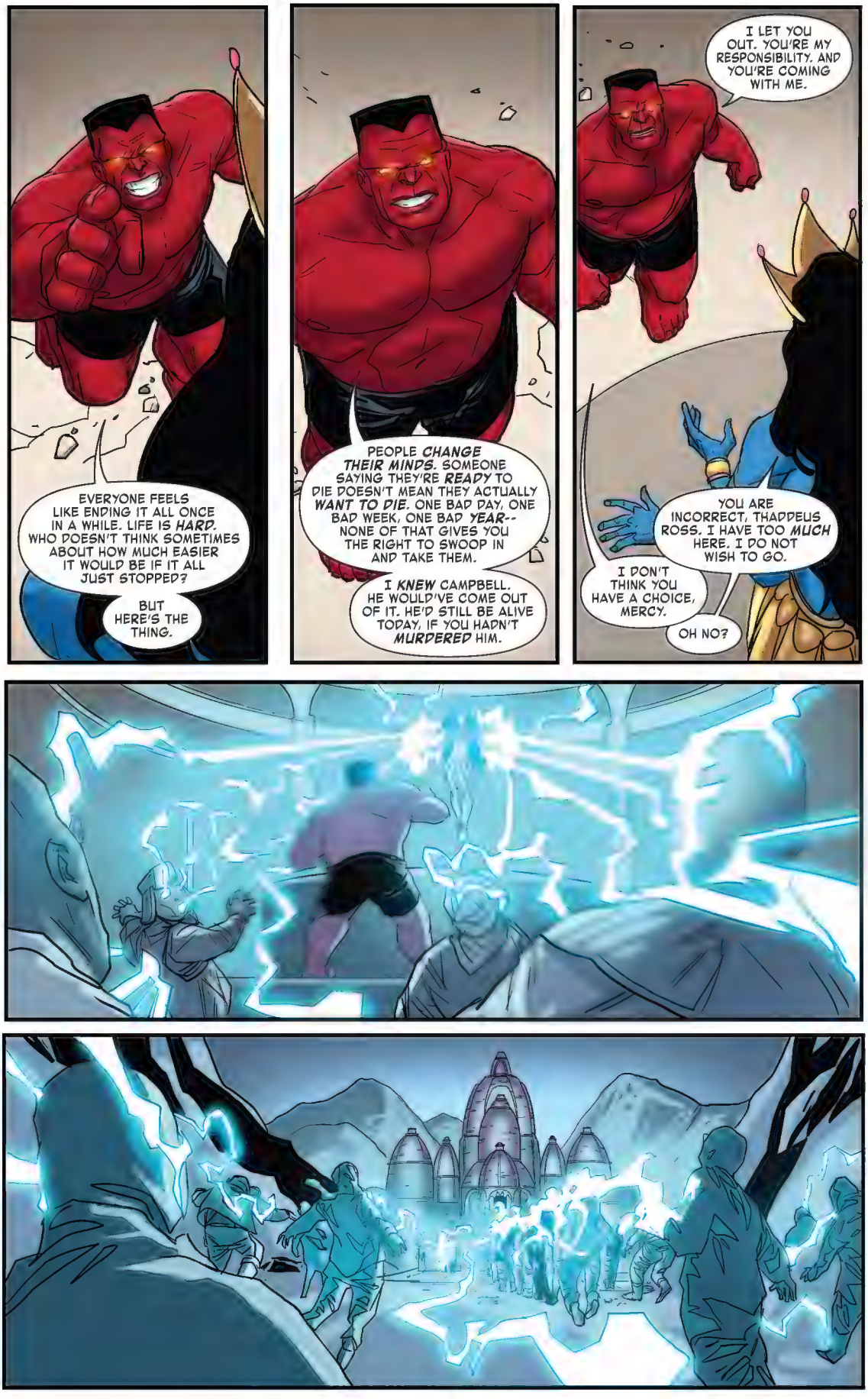
"EVENTUALLY, I GOT A WHISPER OF SOMETHING HAPPENING IN INDIA. THERE'S *ALWAYS* SOMETHING HAPPENING IN INDIA, BUT STILL, IT WAS ENOUGH OF A THREAD THAT IT WAS WORTH FOLLOWING.
"AND BY THAT TIME, I WAS MUCH BETTER EQUIPPED TO HANDLE HER.

"SHE'D FOUND HERSELF THE PERFECT PLACE. HER OWN LITTLE SLICE OF HEAVEN."

RAHMANA!
"IT WAS A TEMPLE TO KALI, THE HINDU GODDESS OF DEATH. I DON'T KNOW WHO BUILT IT, OR HOW. IT WAS MILES UP INTO THE HIMALAYAS. YOU WOULD HAVE THOUGHT IT'D BE THE MOST DESERTED PLACE ON EARTH, BUT IT WASN'T.
"SHE PULLED PEOPLE TO HER. HUNDREDS OF THEM. PILGRIMS. SHE CHANGED HER APPEARANCE TO LOOK LIKE THEIR GODDESS, AND LET THEM BELIEVE THEY WERE IN THE PRESENCE OF REAL DIVINITY.
"ALTHOUGH HONESTLY, WHO'S TO SAY THEY WEREN'T?
"THEY CAME TO DIE, EVERY ONE OF THEM. IT WAS LIKE THAT SHRINE IN FRANCE WHERE PEOPLE GO TO GET HEALED."
"LOURDES."
"YES. LOURDES. LIKE THAT, BUT TWISTED. NO ONE WENT TO THAT TEMPLE THINKING THEY WERE GOING TO LIVE EVEN ONE MORE DAY. THEY WANTED TO DIE, AND SHE GAVE THEM WHAT THEY WANTED."

RAHMANA!
THADDEUS ROSS. THEY THINK YOU ARE RAHMANA, ONE OF THEIR RED-SKINNED DEMONS.
THEY AREN'T SO FAR OFF. WHO DO THEY THINK *YOU* ARE?
THEY BELIEVE I AM KALI, THEIR GODDESS OF DEATH. IN THIS, ALSO, THEY ARE NOT SO FAR OFF.
WHY HAVE YOU COME, THADDEUS ROSS?
I'M NOT SURE YOU SHOULD BE THE ONE WHO GETS TO DECIDE WHEN PEOPLE LIVE OR DIE.
I DO NOT. THEY DECIDE. I SIMPLY MAKE IT EASY FOR THEM ONCE THEIR CHOICE IS MADE.
YOU'RE DELUDED OR INSANE. MAYBE BOTH.

"IT'S FAIR TO SAY THAT WAS NOT THE MOST DIPLOMATIC WAY TO BEGIN THE DISCUSSION."
HOW DARE YOU? WHAT I DO IS SACRED.
KRRZZT
YOU MURDERED MY MAN CAMPBELL. TO BRING YOURSELF BACK. WHAT...WHAT WAS SACRED ABOUT THAT?
CAMPBELL WANTED TO DIE. I COULD NOT HAVE TAKEN HIM IF HE DID NOT WISH TO BE TAKEN.
YOU DON'T...GET IT.
RRAAAH!

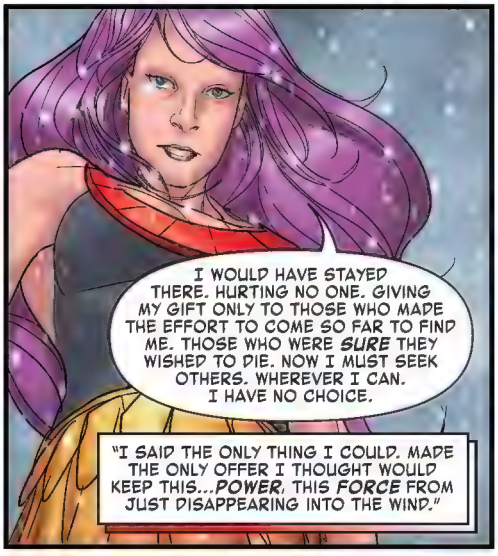

EVERYONE FEELS LIKE ENDING IT ALL ONCE IN A WHILE. LIFE IS HARD. WHO DOESN'T THINK SOMETIMES ABOUT HOW MUCH EASIER IT WOULD BE IF IT ALL JUST STOPPED?
BUT HERE'S THE THING.
PEOPLE CHANGE THEIR MINDS. SOMEONE SAYING THEY'RE READY TO DIE DOESN'T MEAN THEY ACTUALLY WANT TO DIE. ONE BAD DAY, ONE BAD WEEK, ONE BAD YEAR-- NONE OF THAT GIVES YOU THE RIGHT TO SWOOP IN AND TAKE THEM.
I KNEW CAMPBELL. HE WOULD'VE COME OUT OF IT. HE'D STILL BE ALIVE TODAY, IF YOU HADN'T MURDERED HIM.
I LET YOU OUT. YOU'RE MY RESPONSIBILITY. AND YOU'RE COMING WITH ME.
YOU ARE INCORRECT, THADDEUS ROSS. I HAVE TOO MUCH HERE. I DO NOT WISH TO GO.
I DON'T THINK YOU HAVE A CHOICE, MERCY.
OH NO?

I BELIEVE I DO HAVE A CHOICE, THADDEUS ROSS.
THOOM

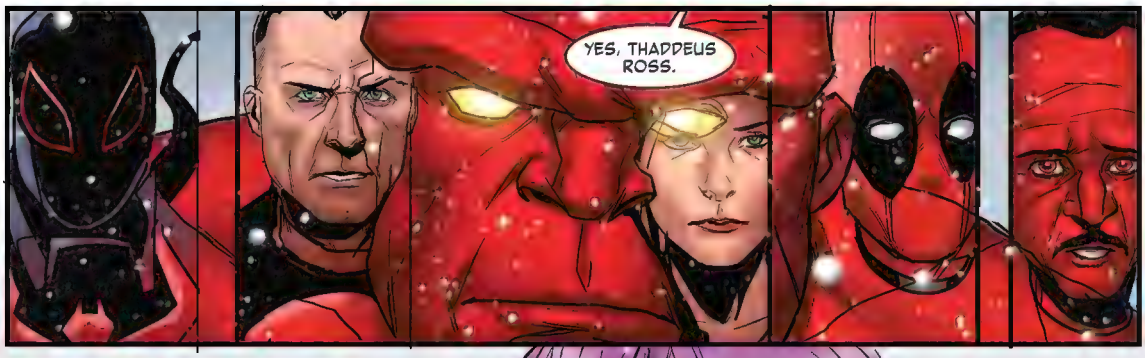
"I COULDN'T FIGHT HER. NOT AFTER SHE'D JUST GORGED HERSELF LIKE THAT. NO WAY.
KRAKH
"FOUR-MILE FALL. IF THE SNOW HADN'T CUSHIONED ME A BIT, I THINK IT WOULD'VE KILLED ME.
"ALMOST DID. I WASN'T GOOD FOR MUCH FOR A WHILE.
"BUT ONLY FOR A WHILE.
"AND SHE WAS STILL UP THERE, WAITING FOR MORE POOR MISGUIDED SOULS TO OFFER THEMSELVES UP TO HER.

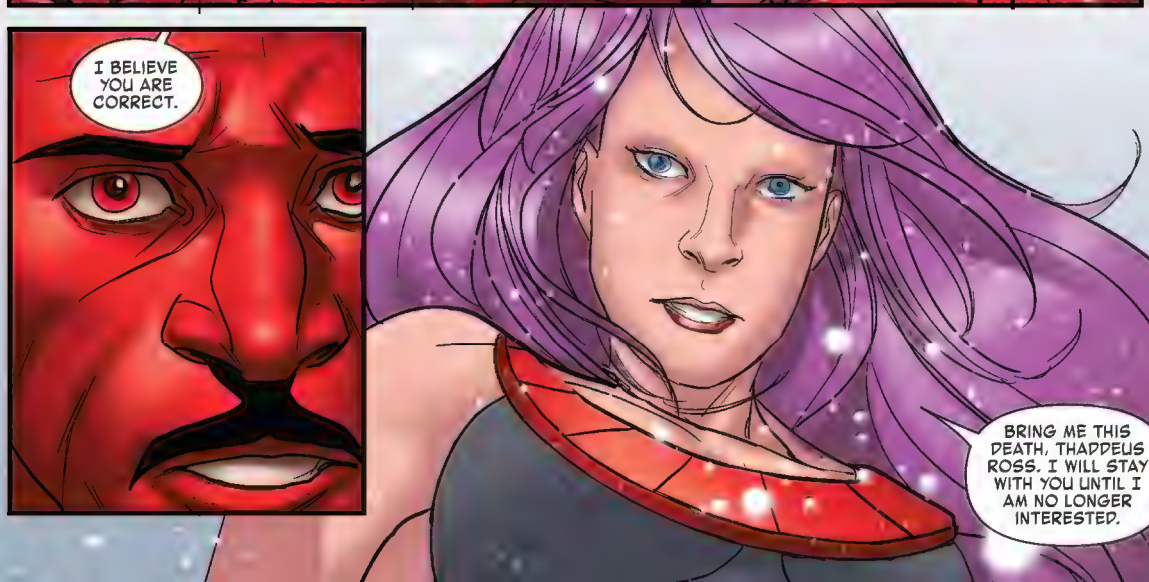
"I SHOULD HAVE LET MERCY STAY BURIED IN THE FIRST PLACE. MY THINKING WAS THAT IF I COULDN'T TAKE HER BACK WITH ME...
"...MAYBE I COULD JUST BURY HER AGAIN.
BOOOOM
RRRRUMMBLE
"I HAD HER. I KNEW IT. I COULD FEEL IT IN MY BONES.
"I WAS AN IDIOT."

YOU DESTROYED A GOOD PLACE, THADDEUS ROSS.
I DID. YOU'RE STILL HERE, THOUGH, SO I DID IT FOR NOTHING. WHAT NOW? WE FIGHT AGAIN, SEE IF WE CAN FIGURE OUT HOW TO KILL EACH OTHER?


I WOULD HAVE STAYED THERE. HURTING NO ONE. GIVING MY GIFT ONLY TO THOSE WHO MADE THE EFFORT TO COME SO FAR TO FIND ME. THOSE WHO WERE ***SURE*** THEY WISHED TO DIE. NOW I MUST SEEK OTHERS. WHEREVER I CAN. I HAVE NO CHOICE.
"I SAID THE ONLY THING I COULD. MADE THE ONLY OFFER I THOUGHT WOULD KEEP THIS...***POWER***, THIS ***FORCE*** FROM JUST DISAPPEARING INTO THE WIND."

I CAN BRING YOU MORE. I HAVE A PLAN--THERE'S SOMETHING I'M TRYING TO DO. IF IT GOES LIKE I THINK IT WILL, YOU'LL FIND ALL THE DEATH YOU NEED.
"I'VE NEVER MADE A ***GOOD*** DECISION ABOUT MERCY. NOT ONE. THIS WAS THE LEAST TERRIBLE CHOICE I HAD AVAILABLE TO ME AT THE TIME. EVEN NOW, I'M CONVINCED OF THAT."


YES, THADDEUS ROSS.


I BELIEVE YOU ARE CORRECT.
BRING ME THIS DEATH, THADDEUS ROSS. I WILL STAY WITH YOU UNTIL I AM NO LONGER INTERESTED.

SO...YOU DON'T HAVE ANY CONTROL OVER HER AT ALL.
NO. IF ANYTHING, SHE HAS CONTROL OVER *ME*. THE ONLY SAVING GRACE IS THAT SHE DOESN'T *QUITE* SEEM TO KNOW IT.
BUT IF I DON'T KEEP HER... INTERESTED...GOD KNOWS WHAT SHE MIGHT DO.
FORTUNATELY, THIS TEAM SEEMS TO PROVIDE PLENTY OF OPPORTUNITIES TO SATISFY HER PARTICULAR NEEDS.
I'VE GOT THE TIGER BY THE TAIL, THOMPSON. ALL I CAN REALLY DO IS TRY NOT TO LET IT GO.
BUT YOU CAN'T...WE HAVE TO DO SOMETHING.
SURE. YOU HAVE ANY IDEAS? BECAUSE HONESTLY...
"...I'M OPEN TO SUGGESTIONS."

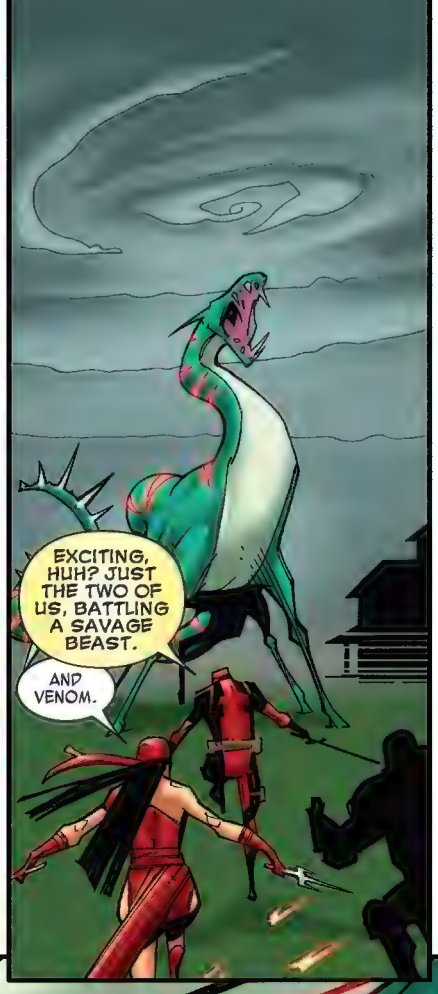
FOURTEEN

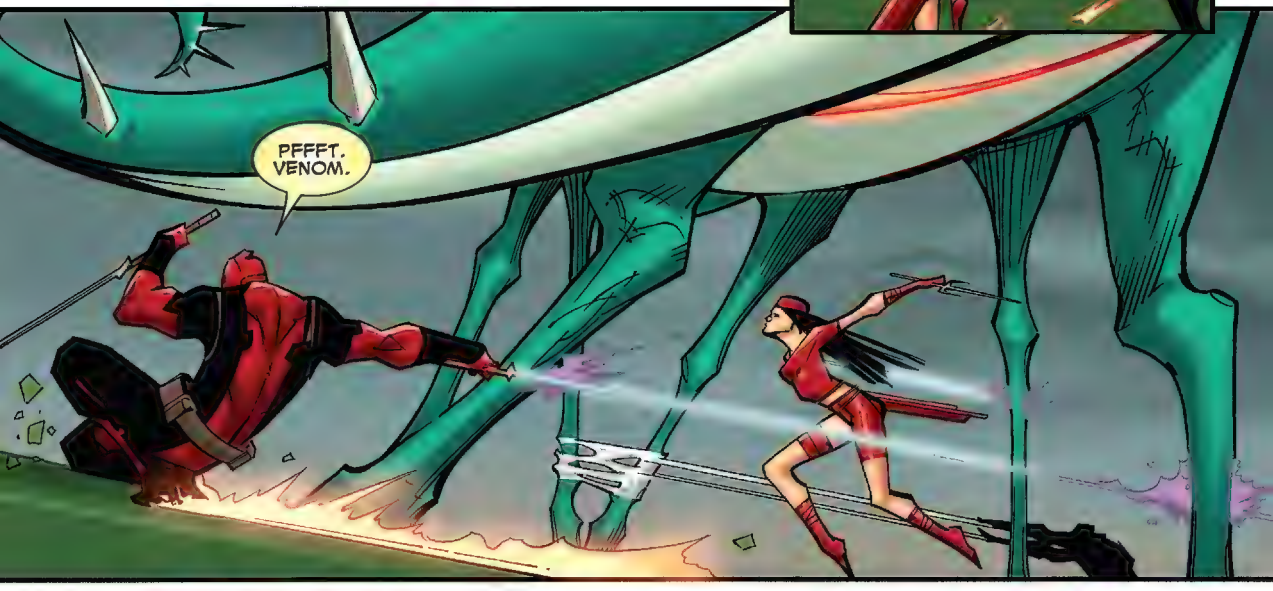
"WHAT IS IT?"
"USED TO BE A COW."
"WHAT HAPPENED TO IT?"
"GAMMA. KILLED THE FAMILY IN THAT HOUSE. ATE THEM."
IT DOESN'T LOOK THAT SCARY.
NEITHER DO I.
RRRRRRRP
LET'S GO KILL THIS THING.

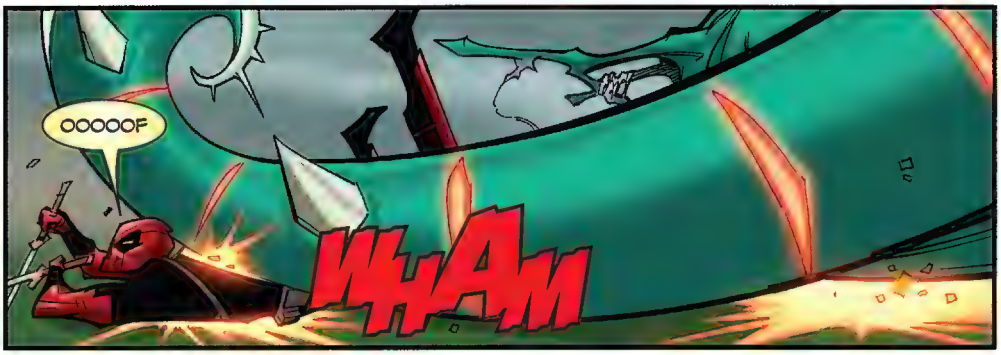
STERNS. HOW LONG DO YOU NEED?
IT'S BASICALLY DONE. I JUST NEED TO TURN IT ON.
THERE.
KLIK
CASTLE, YOU ARE GOOD TO GO. OPERATION BAMBI IS LIVE.
ROGER THAT.
BANG
BANG

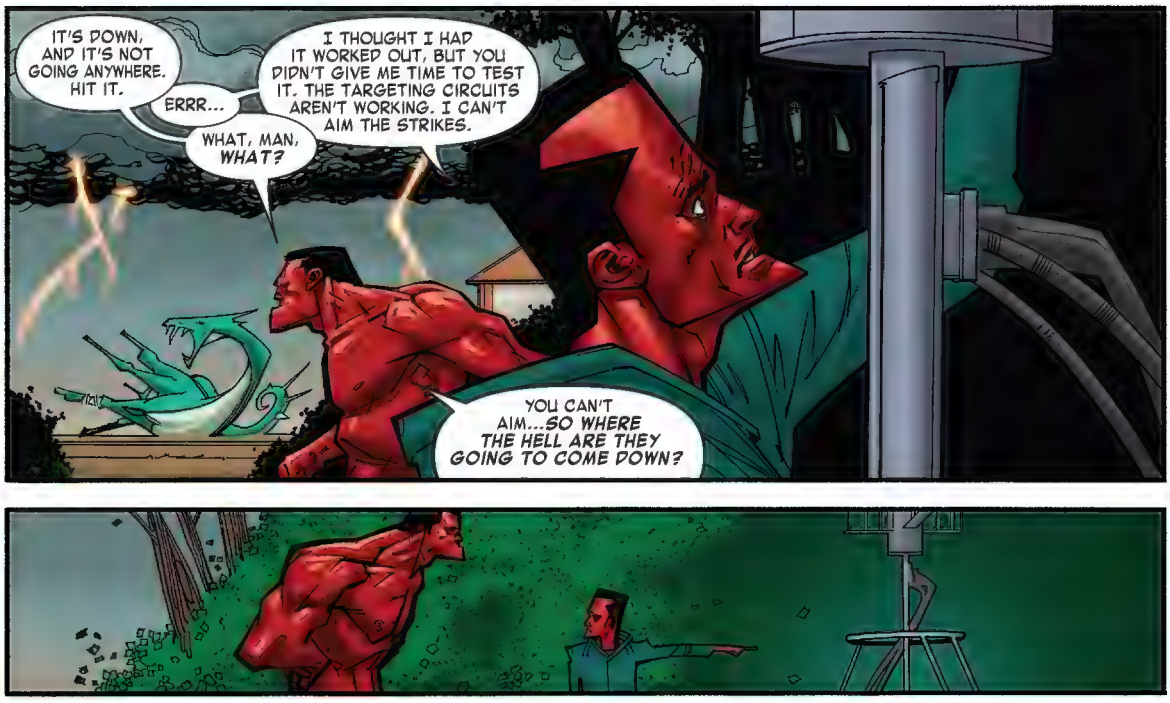
SPAK
SPAK
EEEEEEEEEEE

IT'S BLIND. DEADPOOL, VENOM, ELEKTRA, LIKE WE PLANNED. QUICK, BEFORE ITS HEALING FACTOR KICKS IN.

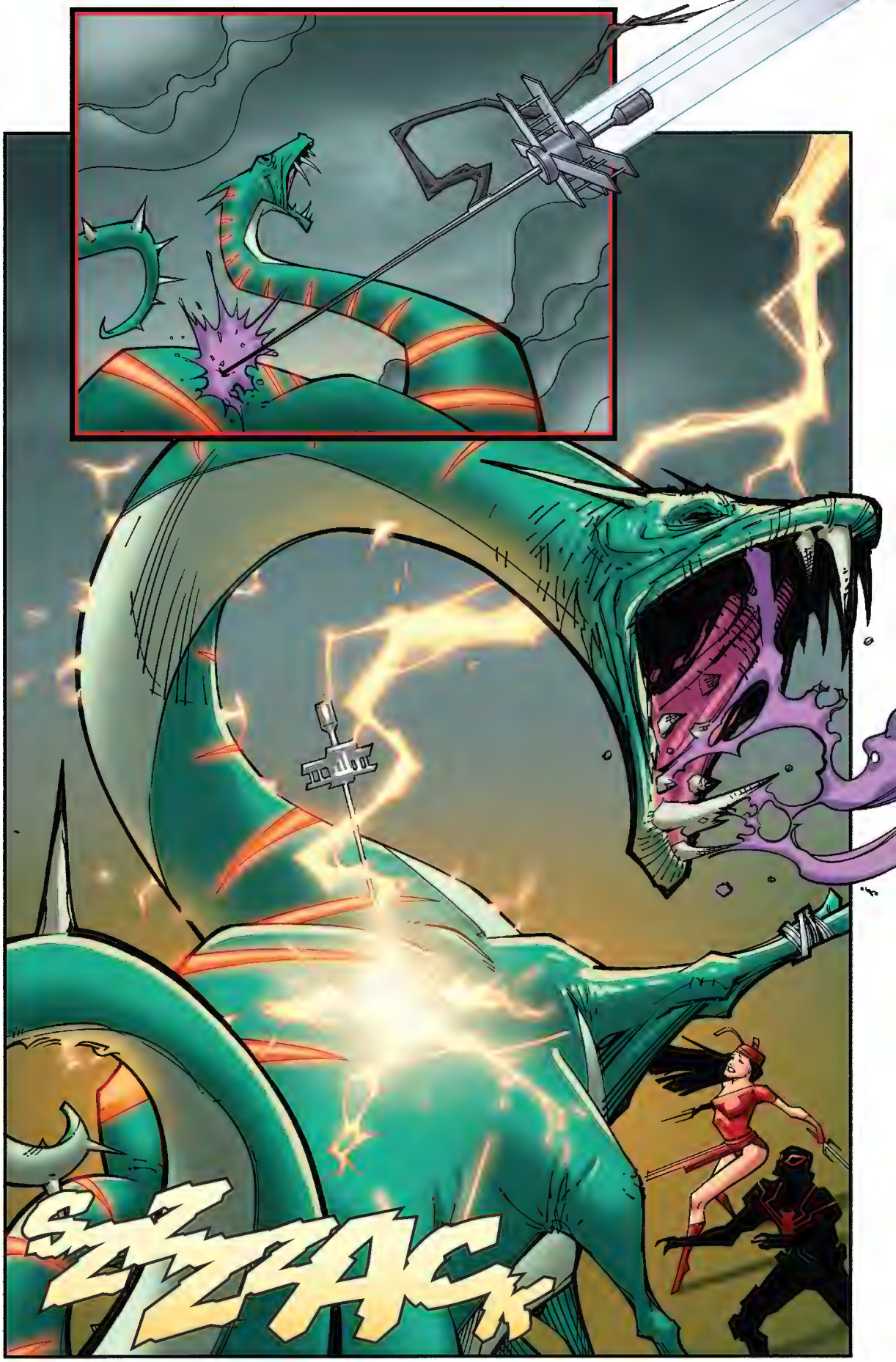

EXCITING, HUH? JUST THE TWO OF US, BATTLING A SAVAGE BEAST.
AND VENOM.


PFFFT. VENOM.


OOOOOF
WHAM


IT'S DOWN, AND IT'S NOT GOING ANYWHERE. HIT IT.
ERRR...
WHAT, MAN, WHAT?
I THOUGHT I HAD IT WORKED OUT, BUT YOU DIDN'T GIVE ME TIME TO TEST IT. THE TARGETING CIRCUITS AREN'T WORKING. I CAN'T AIM THE STRIKES.
YOU CAN'T AIM...SO WHERE THE HELL ARE THEY GOING TO COME DOWN?

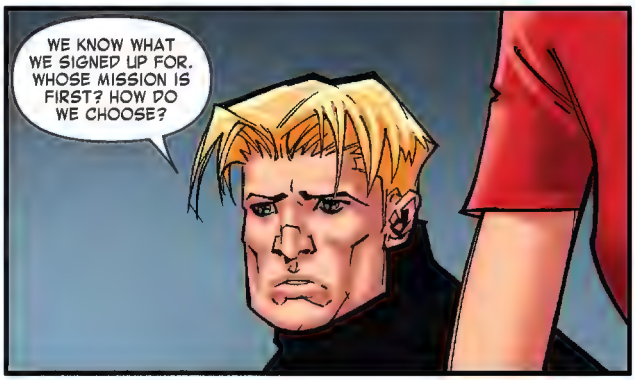
MARVELOUS.
GET CLEAR!!!
ZZZRAK


ZZZAK

THUNDERBOLTS. A LITTLE ON THE NOSE, NO?
I DON'T CARE. IT WORKED.
WHAT'S NEXT?
BACK TO THE SUB.
SOMEONE SCRAPE UP DEADPOOL.

WE ALL KNOW WHY WE'RE HERE.
YOU ALL GOT THE SAME PITCH. HELP ME GET WHAT I NEED, AND I'LL GIVE YOU ACCESS TO A TEAM AND RESOURCES THAT WILL LET *YOU* GET WHAT YOU NEED.
NO QUESTIONS ASKED. WHEN IT'S YOUR TURN, YOU SET THE MISSION, AND WE ALL GIVE EVERYTHING WE HAVE TO GET IT DONE.
WE'RE THE SELFISH AVENGERS.

YOU'VE HELPED ME CLEAN UP A FEW OF MY MESSES. THERE'S MORE TO COME, BUT NOW IT'S TIME I HELD UP MY SIDE OF THE BARGAIN. GOING FORWARD, IT'S ONE FOR YOU, ONE FOR ME.

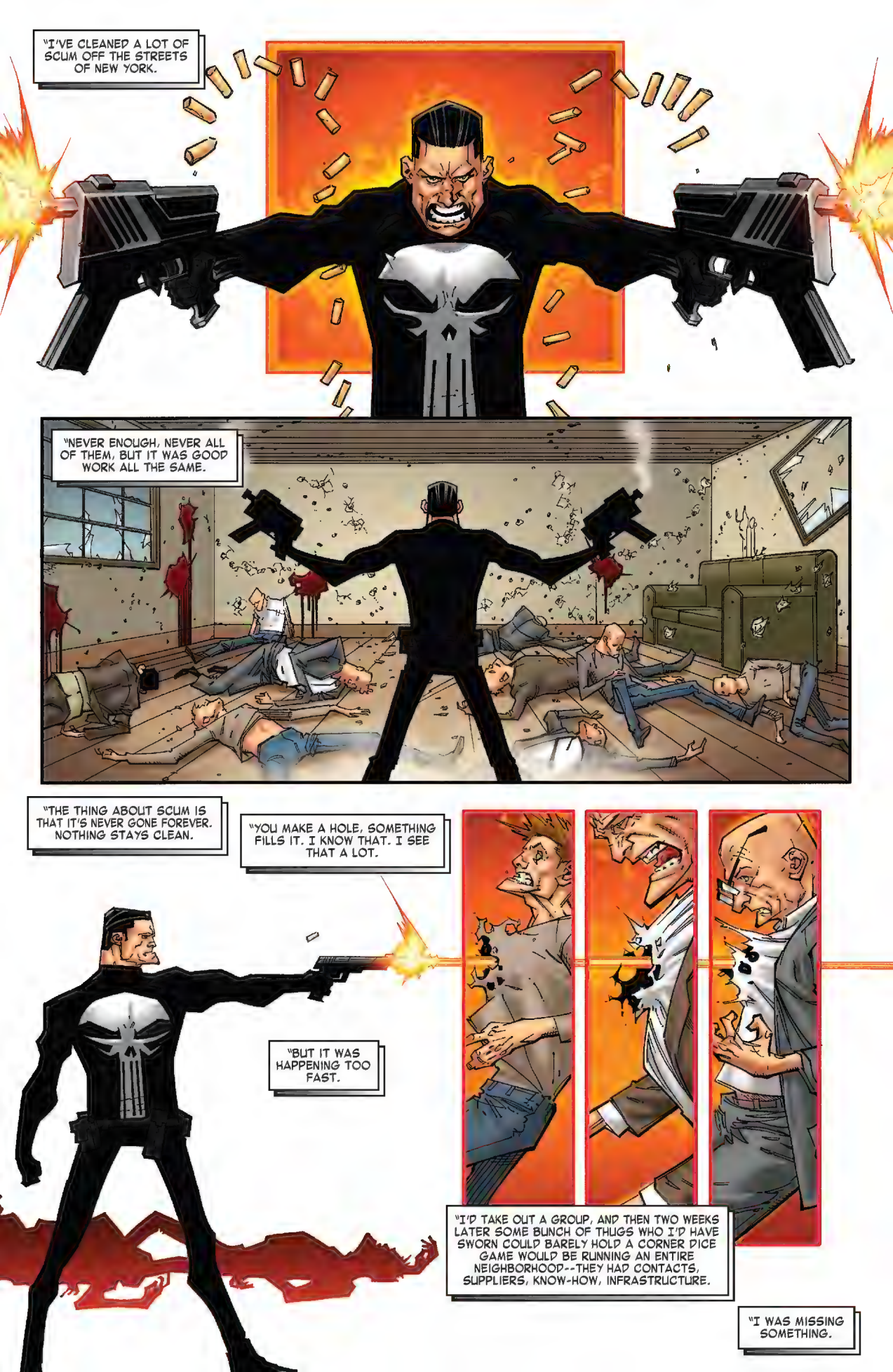

WE KNOW WHAT WE SIGNED UP FOR. WHOSE MISSION IS FIRST? HOW DO WE CHOOSE?

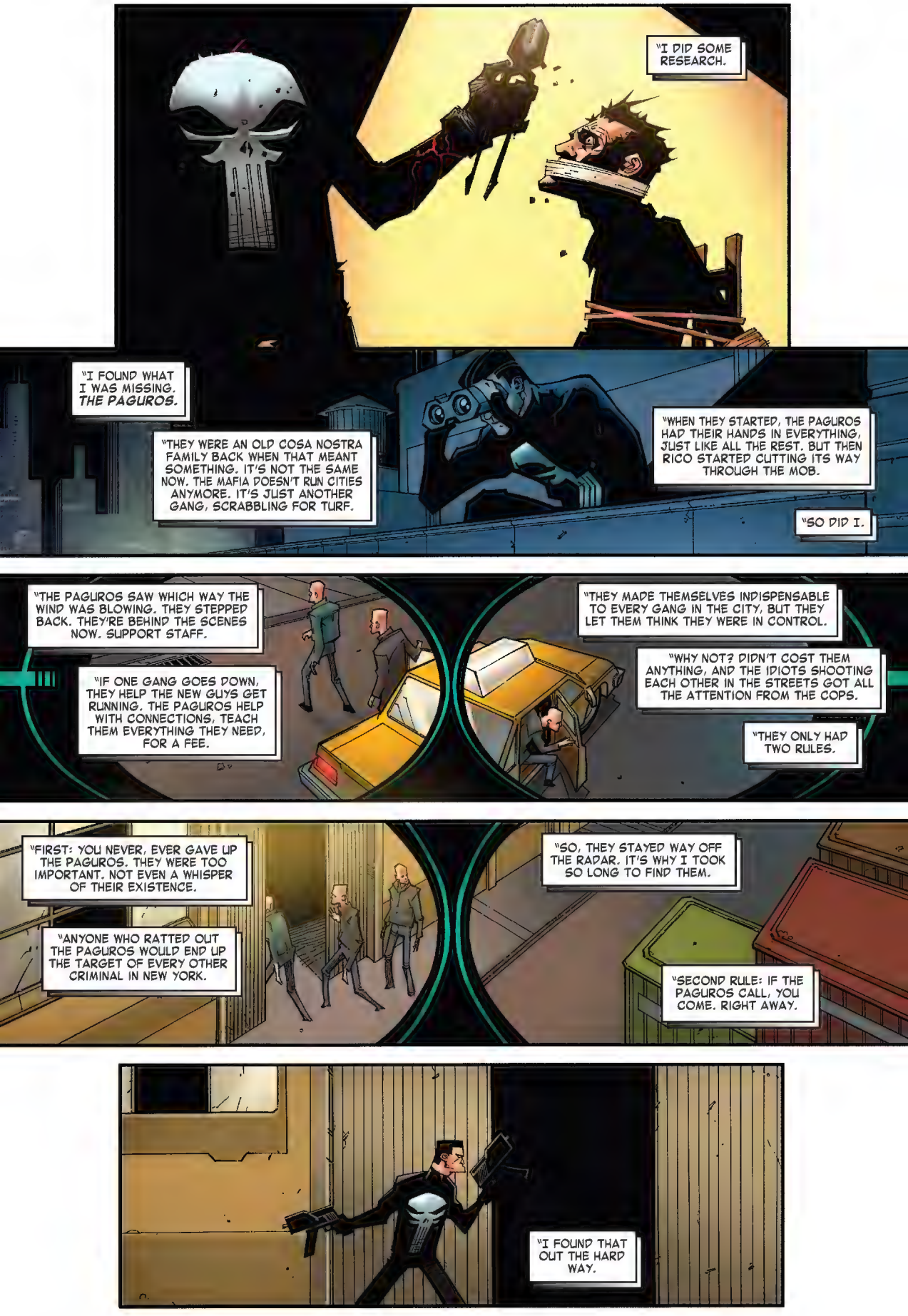
I JUST HAD AN IDEA ABOUT THAT.
ERR...

BE CAREFUL WITH THE FEATHER! I MAKE THAT HAT LOOK GOOD.
WHERE DID YOU FIND IT, ANYWAY?
THERE'S ALL KINDS OF COOL STUFF STASHED ALL ON THIS SUB. THERE'S A ROOM FULL OF TOILET SEATS! NOT THE TOILETS, JUST THE SEATS. SO WEIRD. I'LL SHOW YOU SOMETIME.
...
YOU KNOW, SOMETIMES YOU GOTTA RECOGNIZE A LOSING HAND.
SOMETIMES YOU GOTTA RECOGNIZE WHEN YOU'RE ABOUT TO LOSE A HAND.
FLASH.
THIS IS A LITTLE LOW-TECH, BUT IT'LL DO THE JOB. NO OBJECTIONS TO STERNS PICKING THE FIRST NAME? HE'S GOT NO SKIN IN THE GAME.
IF HIS NAME'S NOT IN THE HAT, THEN WHAT'S HE STILL DOING HERE?
WHAT, YOU WANT ME TO JUST TOSS HIM OUT OF THE SUB?
ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS ASK.

HMPH.
WHAT IS THAT? IT LOOKS LIKE A BONG. WHY WOULD SOMEONE DRAW THAT?
YOU'RE LOOKING AT IT UPSIDE DOWN, DEADPOOL.

ALL RIGHT, CASTLE. IT'S YOUR SHOW. WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?
WE'RE GOING TO TAKE DOWN A CRIME FAMILY OPERATING OUT OF NEW YORK CITY.
I HAVE LITERALLY NEVER BEEN LESS SURPRISED IN ALL MY LIFE.
YOU'VE FILLED ENTIRE CEMETERIES, ALL BY YOURSELF. WHY DO YOU NEED US?
I'M NOT HAPPY ABOUT IT. THESE AREN'T ORDINARY...
OUR TARGET IS THE PAGURO FAMILY.
WHO ARE...?
THE REST OF US DON'T FOLLOW THE MOB LIKE YOU DO, CASTLE.
I DON'T *FOLLOW* THEM. I *KILL* THEM.
ALL RIGHT, LISTEN.


"I'VE CLEANED A LOT OF SCUM OFF THE STREETS OF NEW YORK.
"NEVER ENOUGH, NEVER ALL OF THEM, BUT IT WAS GOOD WORK ALL THE SAME.
"THE THING ABOUT SCUM IS THAT IT'S NEVER GONE FOREVER. NOTHING STAYS CLEAN.
"YOU MAKE A HOLE, SOMETHING FILLS IT. I KNOW THAT. I SEE THAT A LOT.
"BUT IT WAS HAPPENING TOO FAST.
"I'D TAKE OUT A GROUP, AND THEN TWO WEEKS LATER SOME BUNCH OF THUGS WHO I'D HAVE SWORN COULD BARELY HOLD A CORNER DICE GAME WOULD BE RUNNING AN ENTIRE NEIGHBORHOOD--THEY HAD CONTACTS, SUPPLIERS, KNOW-HOW, INFRASTRUCTURE.
"I WAS MISSING SOMETHING.


"I DID SOME RESEARCH.
"I FOUND WHAT I WAS MISSING. *THE PAGUROS.*
"THEY WERE AN OLD COSA NOSTRA FAMILY BACK WHEN THAT MEANT SOMETHING. IT'S NOT THE SAME NOW. THE MAFIA DOESN'T RUN CITIES ANYMORE. IT'S JUST ANOTHER GANG, SCRABBLING FOR TURF.
"WHEN THEY STARTED, THE PAGUROS HAD THEIR HANDS IN EVERYTHING, JUST LIKE ALL THE REST. BUT THEN RICO STARTED CUTTING ITS WAY THROUGH THE MOB.
"SO DID I.
"THE PAGUROS SAW WHICH WAY THE WIND WAS BLOWING. THEY STEPPED BACK. THEY'RE BEHIND THE SCENES NOW. SUPPORT STAFF.
"IF ONE GANG GOES DOWN, THEY HELP THE NEW GUYS GET RUNNING. THE PAGUROS HELP WITH CONNECTIONS, TEACH THEM EVERYTHING THEY NEED, FOR A FEE.
"THEY MADE THEMSELVES INDISPENSABLE TO EVERY GANG IN THE CITY, BUT THEY LET THEM THINK THEY WERE IN CONTROL.
"WHY NOT? DIDN'T COST THEM ANYTHING, AND THE IDIOTS SHOOTING EACH OTHER IN THE STREETS GOT ALL THE ATTENTION FROM THE COPS.
"THEY ONLY HAD TWO RULES.
"FIRST: YOU NEVER, EVER GAVE UP THE PAGUROS. THEY WERE TOO IMPORTANT. NOT EVEN A WHISPER OF THEIR EXISTENCE.
"ANYONE WHO RATTED OUT THE PAGUROS WOULD END UP THE TARGET OF EVERY OTHER CRIMINAL IN NEW YORK.
"SO, THEY STAYED WAY OFF THE RADAR. IT'S WHY I TOOK SO LONG TO FIND THEM.
"SECOND RULE: IF THE PAGUROS CALL, YOU COME. RIGHT AWAY.
"I FOUND THAT OUT THE HARD WAY.

"THE PAGUROS DON'T HAVE THEIR OWN MUSCLE. THEY DON'T NEED IT. EVERY CRIMINAL IN NEW YORK WILL DROP WHATEVER THEY'RE DOING TO PROTECT THEM.
"THEY HAVE TO. WITHOUT THE PAGUROS, THEY'RE OUT OF BUSINESS.
"THEY KNEW I WAS ONTO THEM, AND THEY SET A TRAP.
"IF I'D KNOWN AHEAD OF TIME, I COULD HAVE WIRED THE WHOLE PLACE UP WITH C4, TAKEN THEM ALL OUT AT ONCE.
"HINDSIGHT."
NEVER GOT THAT CLOSE AGAIN.
BUT *WE'RE* GOING TO.

SO IF I UNDERSTOOD THAT RIGHT, THIS ISN'T ABOUT TAKING DOWN JUST ONE BATCH OF CRIMINALS. IF THESE PAGUROS CALL FOR BACKUP, IT COULD MEAN WE'D BE FIGHTING *EVERY BAD GUY IN NEW YORK.*
I IMAGINE HE'S HOPING FOR EXACTLY THAT.
DOESN'T MATTER. THAT'S THE DEAL. WE DON'T GET TO DECIDE WHICH MISSIONS TO TAKE. WE JUST DO THEM. WHEN IT'S YOUR TURN, YOU'LL GET THE SAME OPPORTUNITY.
CAN. NOT. WAIT.
CLANK

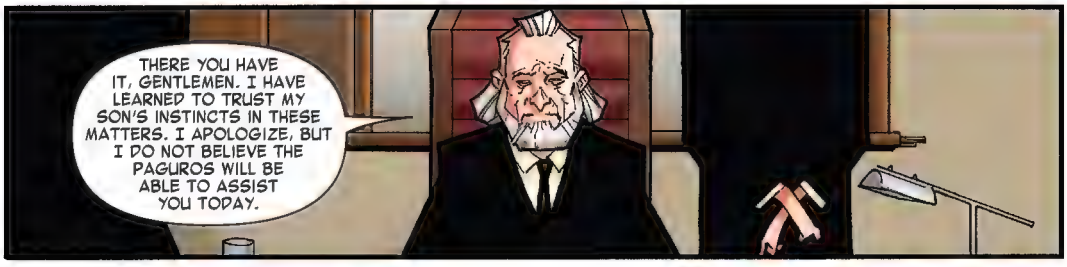
YOU THINK WE'LL NEED THIS MUCH HARDWARE? SEEMS LIKE OVERKILL, EVEN FOR WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT.
IT'S NOT FOR YOU. THESE ARE MINE. WE DON'T ALL HAVE ALIENS TO FIGHT OUR BATTLES FOR US.
THIS ISN'T ABOUT THE GUNS. I WAS LOOKING FOR SOMETHING ELSE.

WHAT'S IN THERE?
TARGETS.

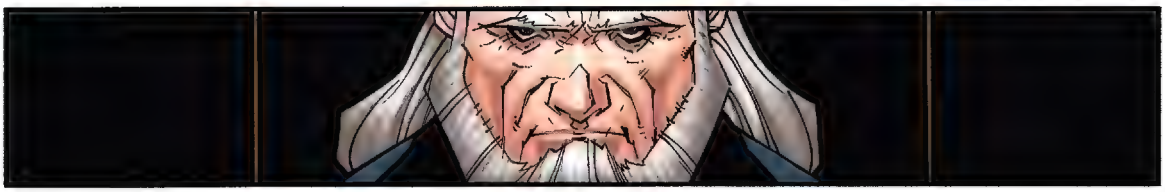
THESE ARE THE PAGUROS I WAS ABLE TO IDENTIFY. THERE MAY BE MORE, BUT THESE ARE THE THREE I'M SURE ABOUT.
THIS GUY LOOKS REALLY FAMILIAR. HE WAS ON *SOPRANOS*, RIGHT?

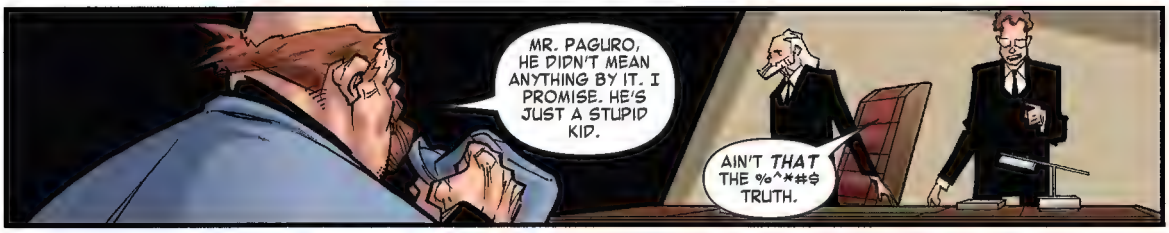
NO.

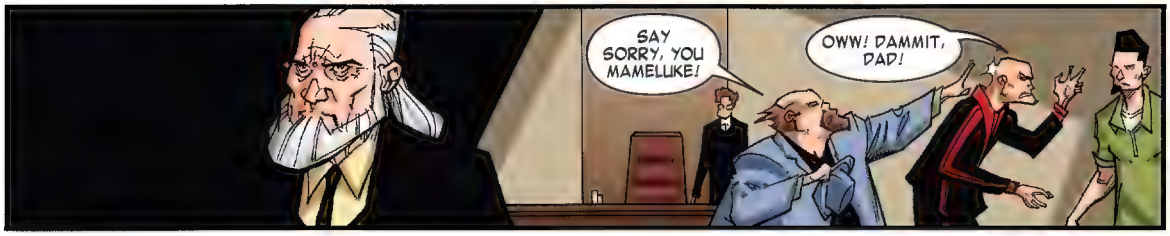
"HE WASN'T."
NOBIS EST DOMI
SO WHAT DO YOU THINK, FERDINAND?
I DUNNO, POPS.

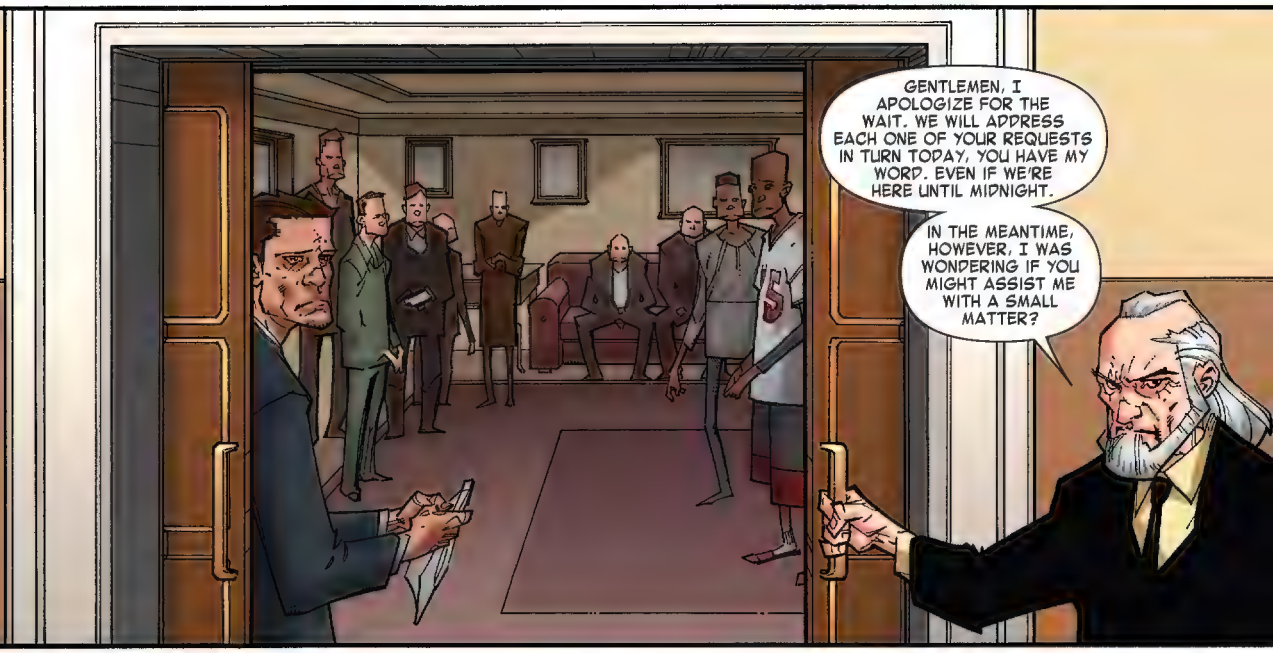

THERE YOU HAVE IT, GENTLEMEN. I HAVE LEARNED TO TRUST MY SON'S INSTINCTS IN THESE MATTERS. I APOLOGIZE, BUT I DO NOT BELIEVE THE PAGUROS WILL BE ABLE TO ASSIST YOU TODAY.

MR. PAGURO, PLEASE, YOU GOTTA RECONSIDER. WE AIN'T ASKIN' FOR MUCH. JUST A LITTLE CONSIDERATION, YOU KNOW. I DON'T KNOW HOW WE'RE GONNA MAKE IT THROUGH WITHOUT A LITTLE CONSIDERATION.
WE *HAVE* CONSIDERED IT. YOU KNOW THIS HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH YOU OR YOUR FAMILY PERSONALLY, MR. NOBILI. YOU HAVE A PROUD NAME, AND WE RESPECT THAT.
BUT YOU HAVE BEEN GIVEN OPPORTUNITIES IN THE PAST, AND IT HAS BECOME CLEAR THAT YOU ARE NOT ABLE TO HANDLE EVEN THE SLIGHTEST AMOUNT OF RESPONSIBILITY.
WHAT MY POPS IS SAYING, GORDO, IS THAT THINGS TURN TO $%^& IN YOUR HANDS. ALWAYS HAVE, ALWAYS WILL. AND WE PAGUROS, WE DON'T LIKE TO GET OUR HANDS DIRTY.
AIN'T THAT THE %^*#$ TRUTH.



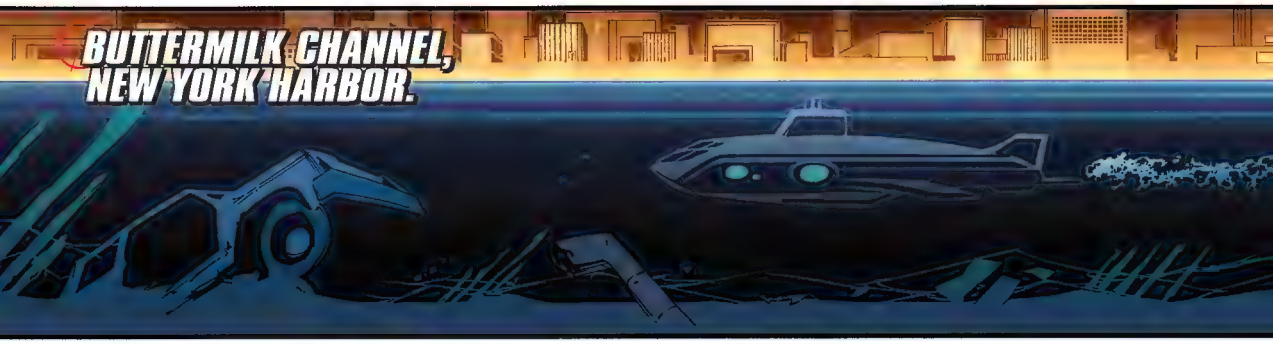

MR. PAGURO, HE DIDN'T MEAN ANYTHING BY IT. I PROMISE. HE'S JUST A STUPID KID.
AIN'T *THAT* THE %^*#$ TRUTH.


SAY SORRY, YOU MAMELUKE!
OWW! DAMMIT, DAD!


GENTLEMEN, I APOLOGIZE FOR THE WAIT. WE WILL ADDRESS EACH ONE OF YOUR REQUESTS IN TURN TODAY, YOU HAVE MY WORD. EVEN IF WE'RE HERE UNTIL MIDNIGHT.
IN THE MEANTIME, HOWEVER, I WAS WONDERING IF YOU MIGHT ASSIST ME WITH A SMALL MATTER?

THE REASON FOR THE DELAY LIES INSIDE MY OFFICE. THE ONCE-PROUD NOBILI FAMILY--GORDO, CARMEN AND YOUNG JOSEPH. THEY HAVE BEEN TOLD, CIVILLY, THAT WE WILL NOT BE ABLE TO RESPOND TO THEIR REQUESTS. AND YET THEY REFUSE TO LEAVE, AND INSULT US, TO BOOT.
SO I WAS WONDERING, PERHAPS...

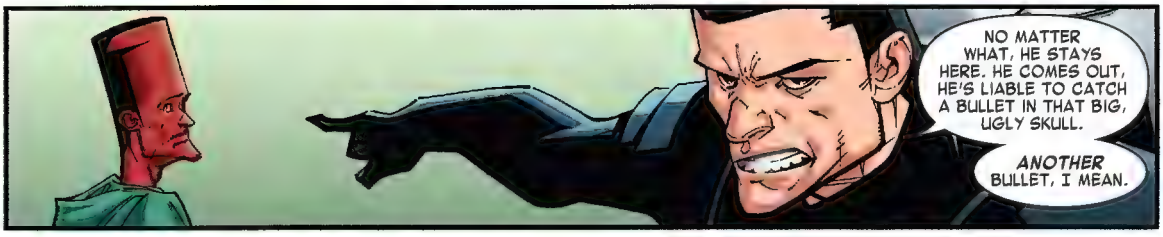
...IF YOU MIGHT BEAT THEM UNTIL THEIR POOR, DISGRACED ANCESTORS FEEL IT IN THE GRAVES THESE IDIOTS ***PISS*** ON BY THEIR VERY ***EXISTENCE.***

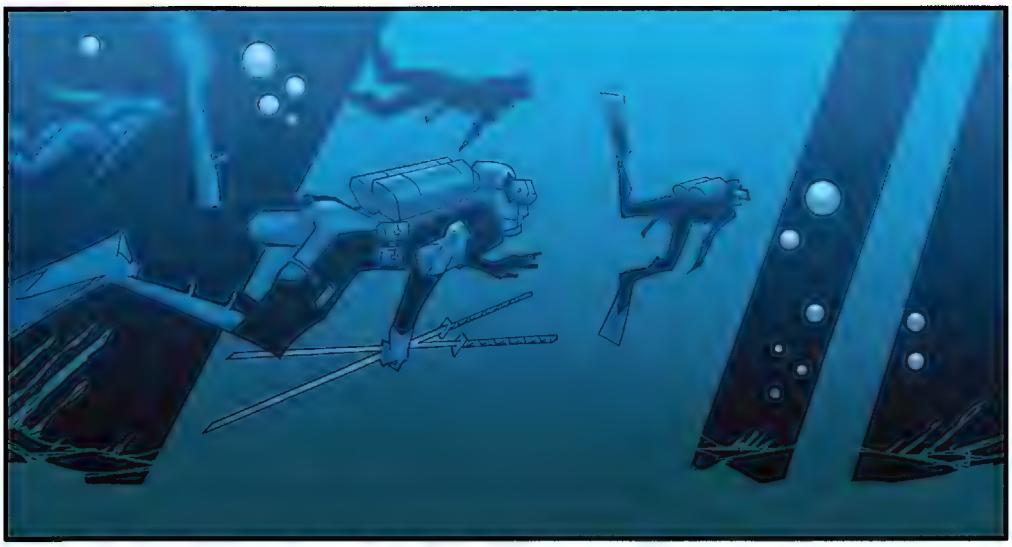

BUTTERMILK CHANNEL, NEW YORK HARBOR.

THIS IS *YOUR* MISSION, CASTLE. IT'S YOUR CALL, BUT YOU'RE *SURE* YOU WANT THE REST OF THE TEAM TO STAY BACK? ISN'T THE POINT OF ALL THIS THAT WE GO IN TOGETHER?
THE PAGUROS WILL BUNKER UP THE MINUTE THEY SMELL DANGER. I WANT TO PUT THAT OFF AS LONG AS POSSIBLE, TRY TO TAKE THEM UNAWARE. AND IF IT'S NOT THE PAGUROS, IT'LL BE THE AVENGERS COMING DOWN ON US. THIS TEAM IS TOO CONSPICUOUS.
I'LL GO IN ALONE, RECON, AND THEN I'LL BRING THE REST OF YOU IN FOR A SURGICAL STRIKE.
THE AVENGERS AREN'T IN NEW YORK.

WHAT?
I DID A QUICK SCAN WHILE WE WERE APPROACHING THE COAST. THERE'S A LOT OF COP CHATTER--SEEMS LIKE THE AVENGERS HAVE LEFT THE CITY FOR THE TIME BEING. SOMETHING OUT IN SPACE.

VENOM, ELEKTRA...DEADPOOL. WITH ME. ROSS, YOU STAY BACK FOR TACTICAL SUPPORT. I DON'T CARE IF THE AVENGERS ARE OUT OF TOWN OR NOT, A BIG RED FREAK'S GOING TO GET NOTICED. I'LL CALL YOU IN WHEN THE TIME'S RIGHT.
ONE MORE THING.


NO MATTER WHAT, HE STAYS HERE. HE COMES OUT, HE'S LIABLE TO CATCH A BULLET IN THAT BIG, UGLY SKULL.
ANOTHER BULLET, I MEAN.



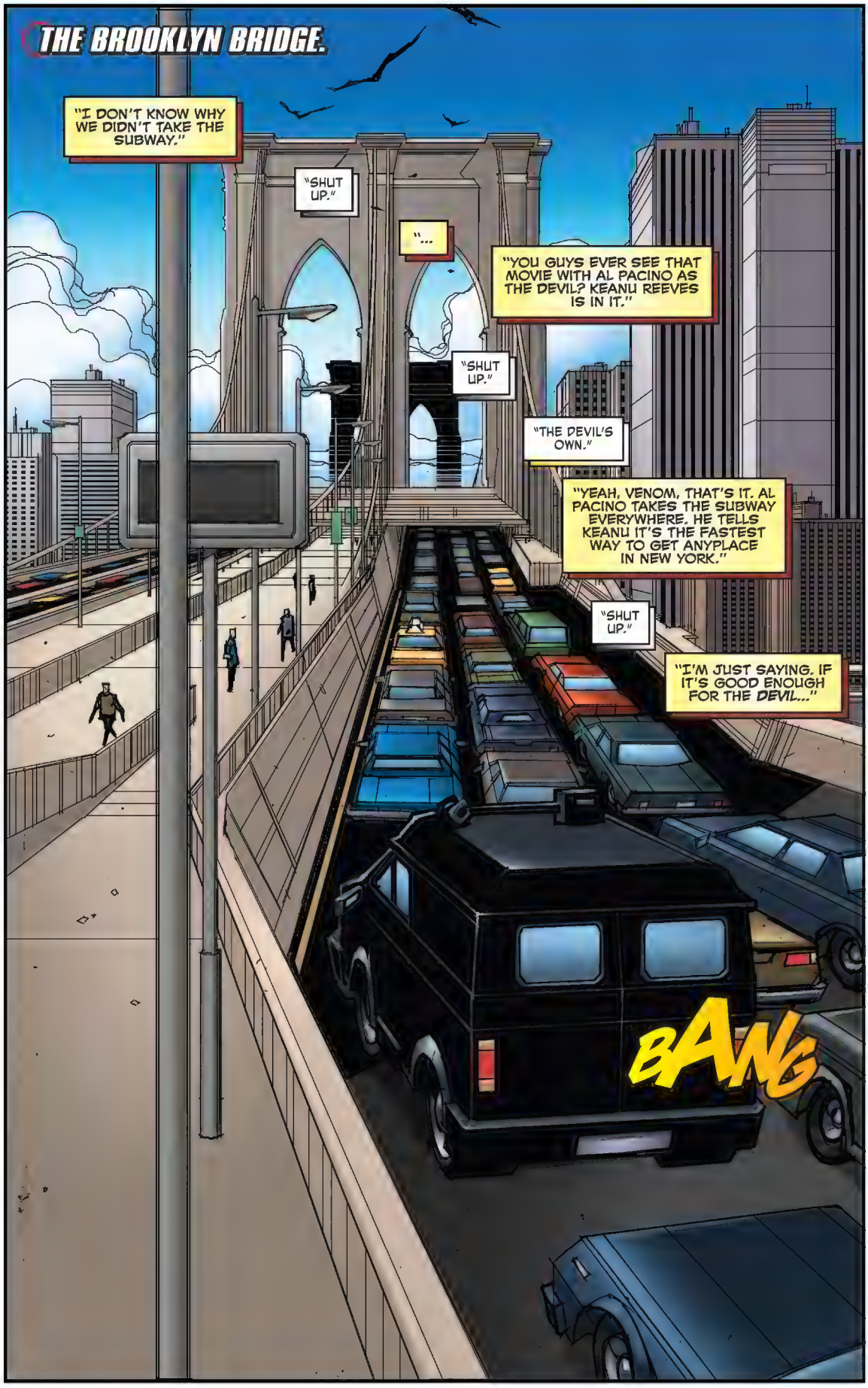
RED HOOK, BROOKLYN.
WHERE DO WE START, CASTLE?
WE START SMALL.

I HAVE AN EQUIPMENT DUMP NEARBY, AND A VEHICLE. WE'LL GEAR UP AND HEAD INTO MANHATTAN.
THE AVENGERS ARE OFF IN SPACE.
THAT'S WHAT I SAID.
WHAT ABOUT THEM? IT'S BETTER FOR US THAT THEY'RE GONE.
MAYBE. I CAN'T STOP THINKING ABOUT IT. THOSE GUYS ARE HEAVY HITTERS. HAD TO BE A PRETTY SCARY REASON FOR THEM TO ALL UP AND LEAVE LIKE THAT.

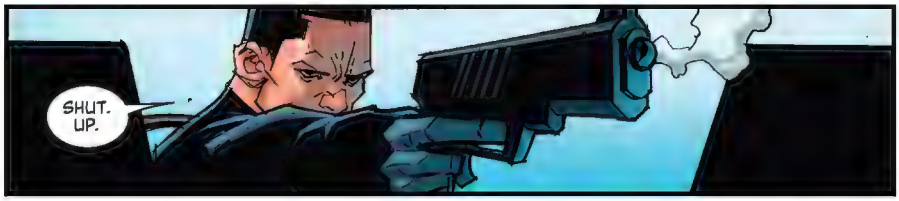
IT DOESN'T MATTER. THEY'RE OFF-PLANET. WE'RE NOT. WHATEVER IT IS...

"...IT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH US."

FIFTEEN


THE BROOKLYN BRIDGE.
"I DON'T KNOW WHY WE DIDN'T TAKE THE SUBWAY."
"SHUT UP."
"..."
"YOU GUYS EVER SEE THAT MOVIE WITH AL PACINO AS THE DEVIL? KEANU REEVES IS IN IT."
"SHUT UP."
"THE DEVIL'S OWN."
"YEAH, VENOM, THAT'S IT. AL PACINO TAKES THE SUBWAY EVERYWHERE. HE TELLS KEANU IT'S THE FASTEST WAY TO GET ANYPLACE IN NEW YORK."
"SHUT UP."
"I'M JUST SAYING. IF IT'S GOOD ENOUGH FOR THE DEVIL..."
BANG

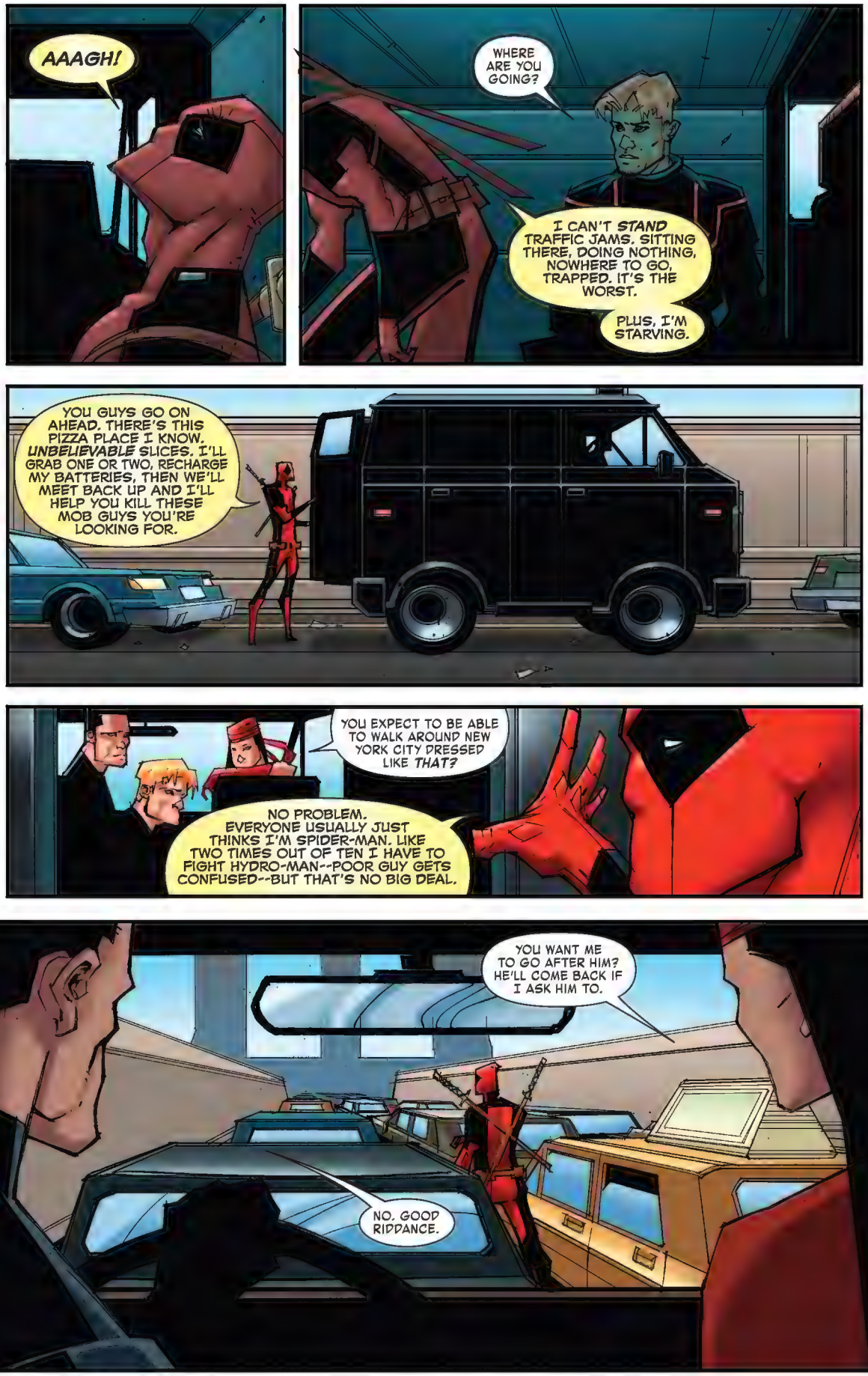
...GOOD... ENOUGH...US?


SHUT. UP.

WE CAN'T TAKE THE SUBWAY, DEADPOOL. NOT UNLESS YOU'VE GOT A WAY WE COULD TAKE *THIS* WITH US.

WHERE THE HELL DID YOU GET THIS THING, CASTLE? ACTUALLY, WHY DO YOU HAVE IT AT ALL?

BECAUSE I'D RATHER BE PREPARED THAN LUCKY.

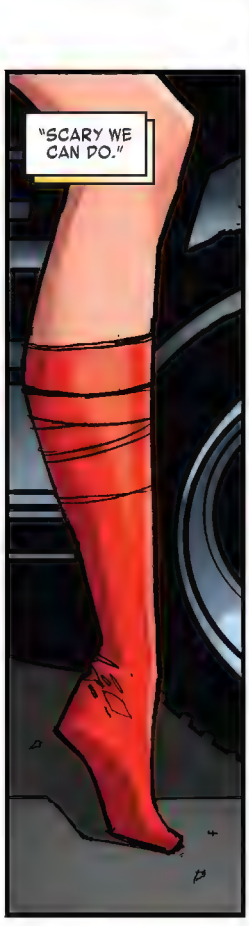

AAAGH!
WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
I CAN'T *STAND* TRAFFIC JAMS. SITTING THERE, DOING NOTHING, NOWHERE TO GO, TRAPPED. IT'S THE WORST.
PLUS, I'M STARVING.
YOU GUYS GO ON AHEAD. THERE'S THIS PIZZA PLACE I KNOW. *UNBELIEVABLE* SLICES. I'LL GRAB ONE OR TWO, RECHARGE MY BATTERIES, THEN WE'LL MEET BACK UP AND I'LL HELP YOU KILL THESE MOB GUYS YOU'RE LOOKING FOR.
YOU EXPECT TO BE ABLE TO WALK AROUND NEW YORK CITY DRESSED LIKE *THAT?*
NO PROBLEM. EVERYONE USUALLY JUST THINKS I'M SPIDER-MAN. LIKE TWO TIMES OUT OF TEN I HAVE TO FIGHT HYDRO-MAN--POOR GUY GETS CONFUSED--BUT THAT'S NO BIG DEAL.
YOU WANT ME TO GO AFTER HIM? HE'LL COME BACK IF I ASK HIM TO.
NO. GOOD RIDDANCE.

NEW YORK HARBOR.
I HATE STAYING BACK ON A MISSION. IT NEVER FEELS RIGHT.
COMMAND AND CONTROL IS AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT OF ANY OPERATION, THADDEUS. THE REST OF THE TEAM NEEDS TO KNOW THE BIG PICTURE.
THE DAY I NEED STRATEGY TIPS FROM YOU, STERNS, IS THE DAY I SHOOT MYSELF IN THE FACE.
AT LEAST WE'RE SAFE DOWN HERE.
MY GOD, YOU'RE A COWARD.
YOU SEE ANYTHING THEY NEED TO WORRY ABOUT?
UNIDENTIFIED CONTACTS INBOUND.
APPROXIMATE COUNT: 11,025.
NOPE.
LOOKS GOOD.

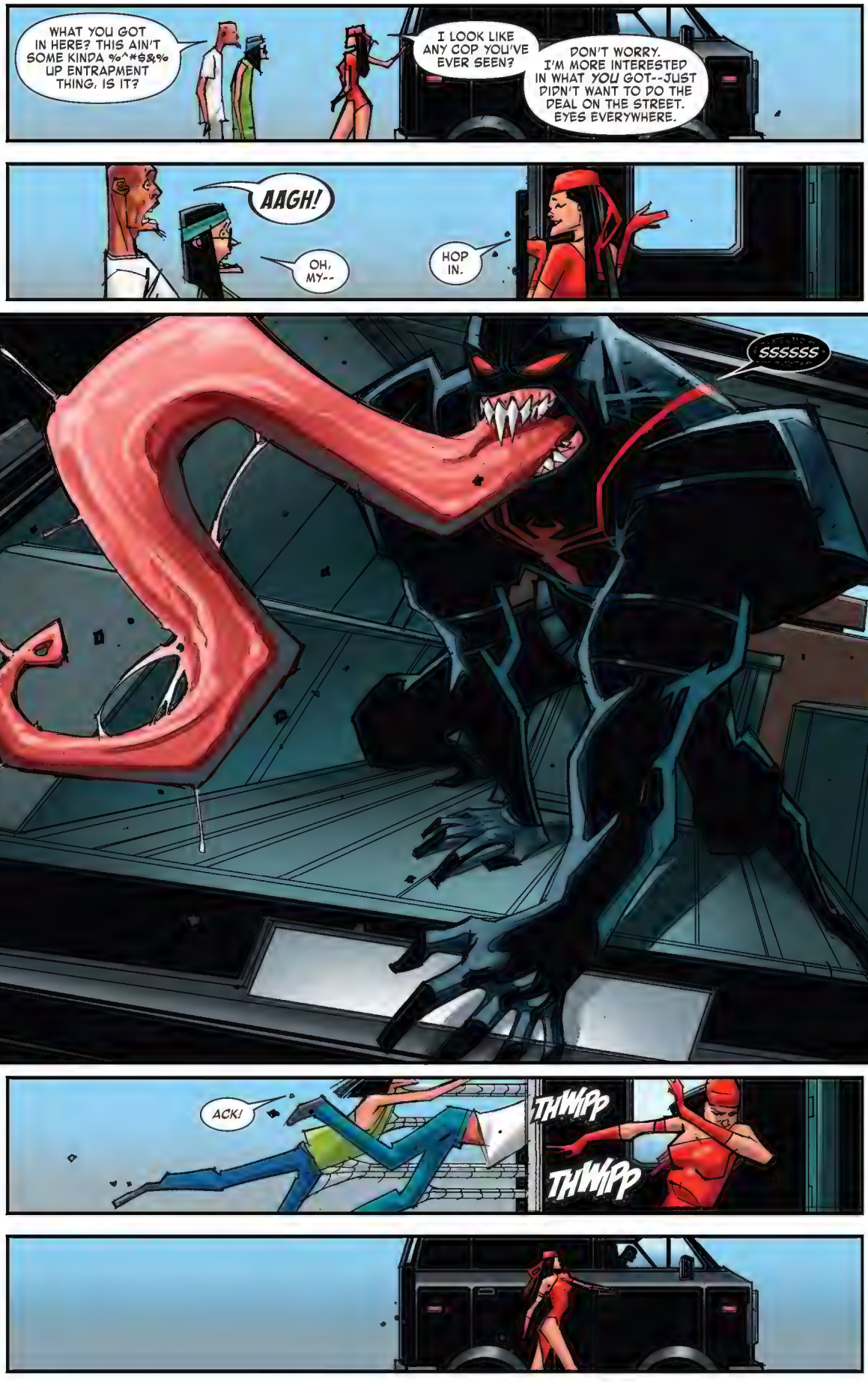
1 LINE HEADED UPTOWN. BETWEEN CHAMBERS & FRANKLIN.
WHY ARE YOU RIDING THE SUBWAY, SPIDER-MAN?
OH.
MY, UH, WEB-THINGS RAN OUT, AND I DIDN'T HAVE ENOUGH MONEY FOR A CAB. AND THE SUBWAY'S REALLY THE FASTEST WAY TO GET AROUND. THERE'S THIS MOVIE--
HERE YOU GO. FOR NEXT TIME.
UH...
THANKS, KID.
WELCOME!

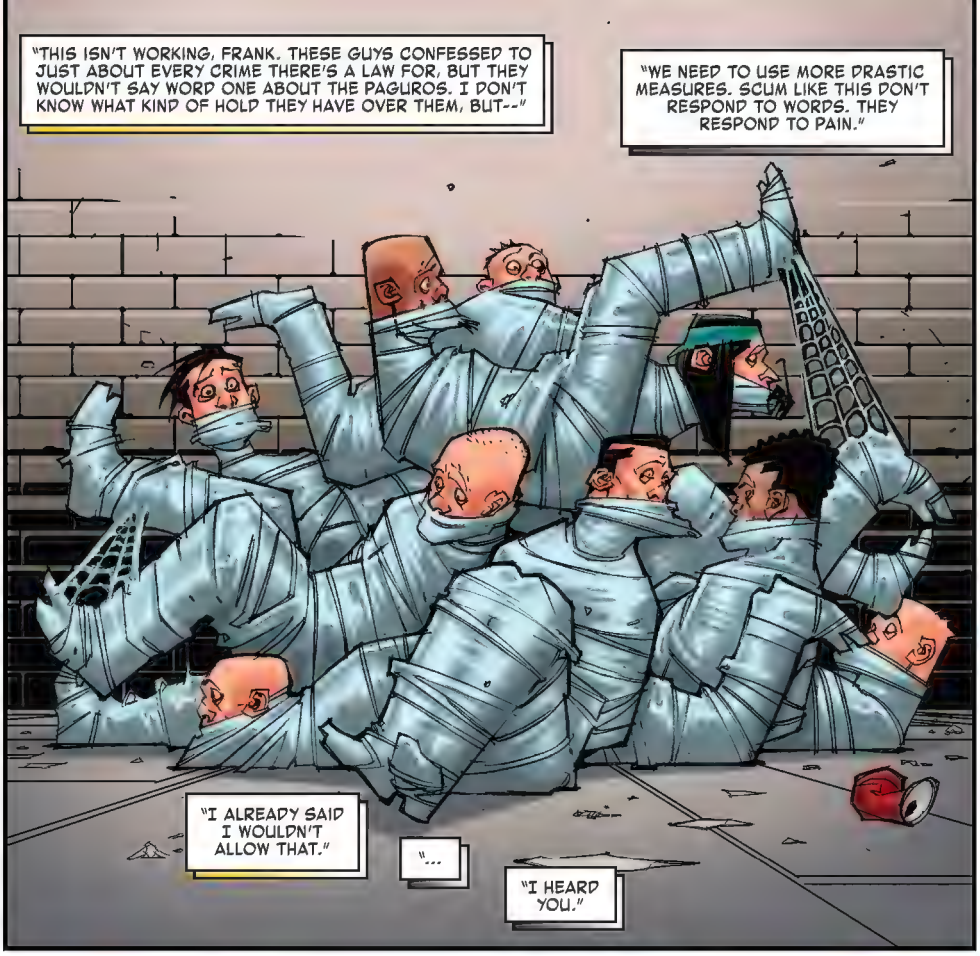
YOU REALLY THINK THIS WILL WORK?
WE'RE TRYING TO FIND THE PAGURO FAMILY, WHICH HAS SURVIVED EVERYTHING THROWN AGAINST THEM--ME INCLUDED--BECAUSE THEY'RE INCREDIBLY GOOD AT NOT BEING FOUND.
OTHER CRIMINALS WON'T TALK ABOUT THEM. THEY'RE TOO AFRAID.
IF YOU WANT TO FIND OUT ANYTHING ABOUT THE PAGUROS, YOU NEED TO BE SCARIER THAN THEY ARE.

SOUTH BRONX.
"WELL, THAT'S ALL RIGHT.


"SCARY WE CAN DO."

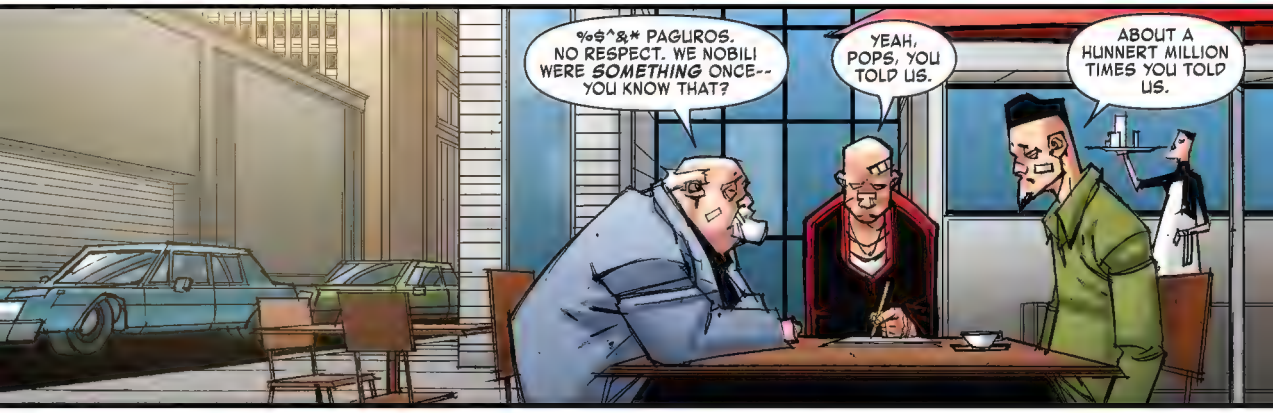
HEY, LITTLE BOYS. YOU WANNA TAKE A RIDE IN MY VAN?


WHAT YOU GOT IN HERE? THIS AIN'T SOME KINDA %^*$&% UP ENTRAPMENT THING, IS IT?
I LOOK LIKE ANY COP YOU'VE EVER SEEN?
DON'T WORRY. I'M MORE INTERESTED IN WHAT YOU GOT--JUST DIDN'T WANT TO DO THE DEAL ON THE STREET. EYES EVERYWHERE.
AAGH!
OH, MY--
HOP IN.
SSSSSS
ACK!
THWIPP
THWIPP

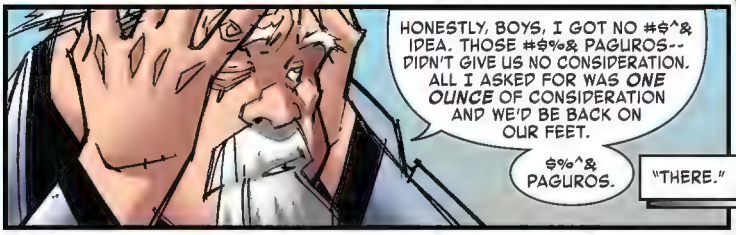

"THIS ISN'T WORKING, FRANK. THESE GUYS CONFESSED TO JUST ABOUT EVERY CRIME THERE'S A LAW FOR, BUT THEY WOULDN'T SAY WORD ONE ABOUT THE PAGUROS. I DON'T KNOW WHAT KIND OF HOLD THEY HAVE OVER THEM, BUT--"
"WE NEED TO USE MORE DRASTIC MEASURES. SCUM LIKE THIS DON'T RESPOND TO WORDS. THEY RESPOND TO PAIN."
"I ALREADY SAID I WOULDN'T ALLOW THAT."
"..."
"I HEARD YOU."

I'M SURE THEY'RE BAD GUYS, BUT WE DIDN'T ACTUALLY SEE THEM COMMITTING ANY CRIMES.
NO.
MY WEBS WILL DISSOLVE IN A FEW HOURS. WE DON'T HAVE TO DO ANYTHING-- THEY'LL GET FREE ON THEIR OWN.
RIGHT.
COME ON, FLASH. LET'S FIGURE OUT A NEW APPROACH.
SURE.

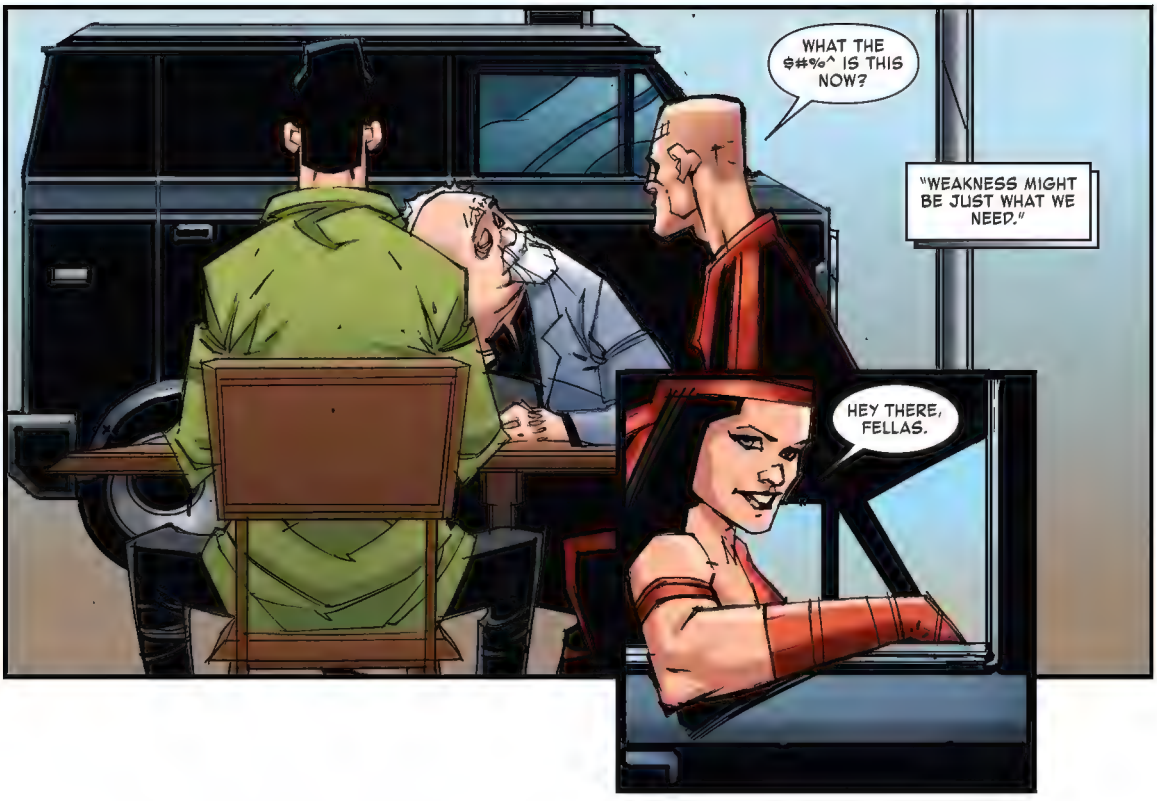
KLIK


%@$^&* PAGUROS. NO RESPECT. WE NOBILI WERE SOMETHING ONCE-- YOU KNOW THAT?
YEAH, POPS, YOU TOLD US.
ABOUT A HUNNERT MILLION TIMES YOU TOLD US.

BUT I GOTTA TELL YA, THESE DAYS WE NOBILI AIN'T %&$#. CARMEN AND I WENT AROUND ASKING FOR WORK FROM SOME OF THE OTHER CREWS, THEY LAUGHED RIGHT IN OUR FACES. AIN'T THAT RIGHT, CARMEN?
YEAH, JOE, THAT'S RIGHT. IT'S UGLY OUT THERE, POPS. WHATTA WE GONNA DO NOW?


HONESTLY, BOYS, I GOT NO #@^& IDEA. THOSE #@%& PAGUROS-- DIDN'T GIVE US NO CONSIDERATION. ALL I ASKED FOR WAS ONE OUNCE OF CONSIDERATION AND WE'D BE BACK ON OUR FEET.
@%^& PAGUROS.
"THERE."

@^%&% PAGUROS.
"I KNOW THESE THREE. THEY'RE IDIOTS, AND THEY MAY NOT KNOW ANYTHING, BUT THEY'RE WEAK."


WHAT THE @#%^ IS THIS NOW?
"WEAKNESS MIGHT BE JUST WHAT WE NEED."
HEY THERE, FELLAS.

STILL THE 1 LINE.
STILL HEADED UPTOWN.
HMMMM...

SCREEEEEE
WHOAH!

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO PULL THIS TRAIN OUT OF SERVICE. WE APOLOGIZE FOR THE INCONVENIENCE, BUT...THERE'S SOMETHING HAPPENING. YOU'RE GOING TO WANT TO GET YOURSELVES INDOORS AS SOON AS YOU CAN.
HMMMMM...

'SCUSE ME! PARDON ME!
OH, MAN.

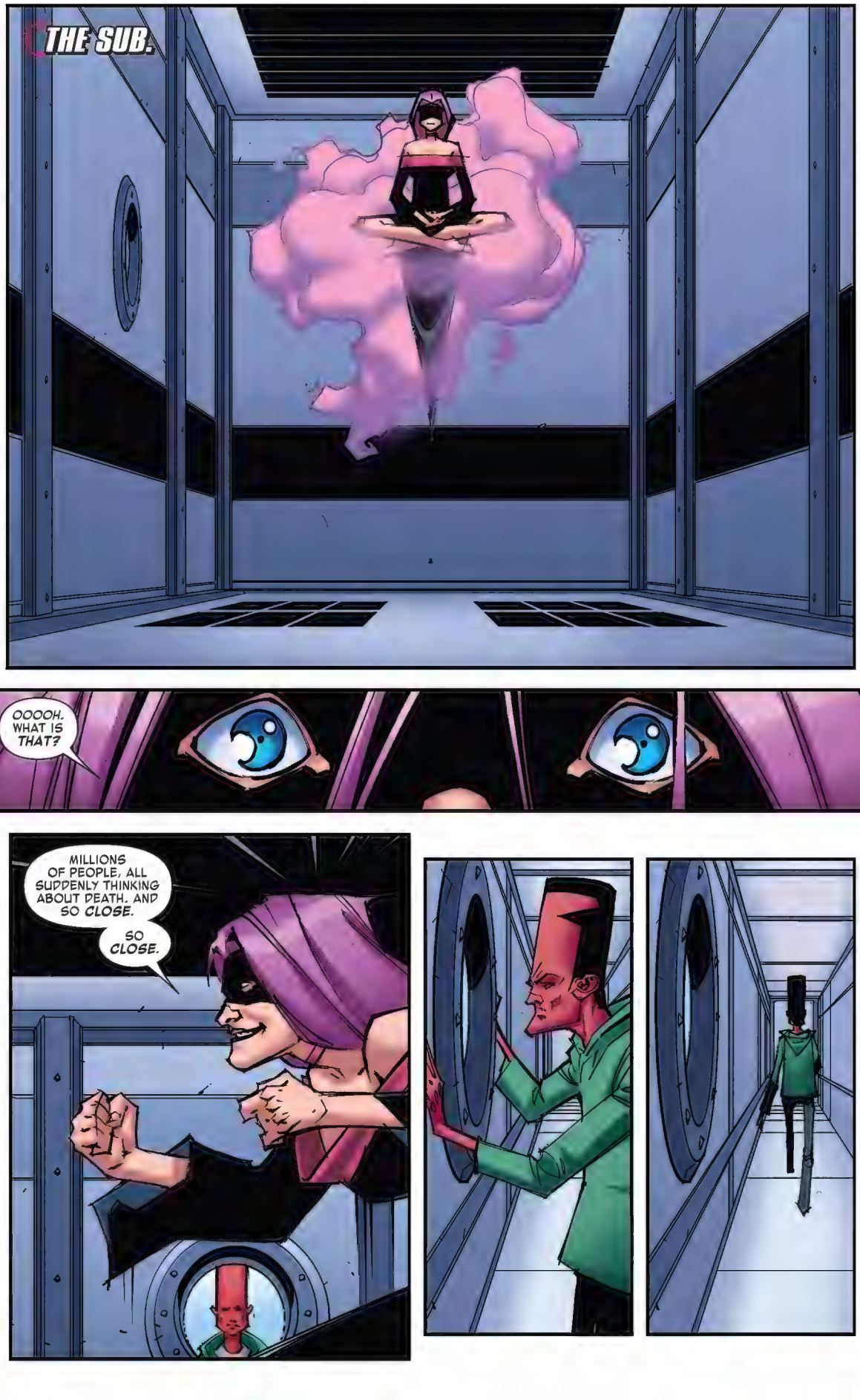
CHRIST! WE'LL TELL YA! WHADDYA WANNA KNOW? YOU NAME IT!
$%^&#% PUNISHER AND SOME #$^&*IN' MONSTER? DAMN RIGHT YOU'LL TELL 'EM, POPS!
SSSSS
TELL US ABOUT THE PAGUROS. EVERYTHING YOU KNOW. START WITH WHERE THEY HOLE UP.
HELL, FELLAS, YOU SHOULDA JUST ASKED IN THE FIRST PLACE. NO NEED FOR ALL THIS VAN BUSINESS. MY BOYS AND ME, WE GOT NO LOVE FOR THE PAGUROS.
THEY GOT THEIR OFFICE OVER ON BRONXDALE AVENUE IN HUNTS POINT. NUMBER 1620, I THINK. THAT'S WHERE YOU'LL FIND THOSE ARROGANT %$#&S. WE WAS JUST OVER THERE.
BOOOOM
WHAT THE HELL WAS THAT?
SOUNDED LIKE AN EXPLOSION.
I DIDN'T HEAR ANYTHING.
I'M GOING TO CHECK IT OUT.
UH... GUYS...

WE'VE GOT TO GET BACK DOWNTOWN. PEOPLE ARE GOING TO NEED OUR HELP.
THAT'S NOT THE MISSION.
FORGET THE MISSION, CASTLE!
LISTEN, YOU FRATBOY FREAK. YOUR MISSION'S GOING TO COME OUT OF THAT HAT ONE OF THESE TIMES.
YOU CAN BUG OUT RIGHT NOW IF YOU WANT TO, PLAY SAVE THE DAY, BUT YOU DO THAT AND I DON'T LIFT A FINGER WHEN IT'S YOUR TURN AT BAT.
YOUR DECISION. COME WITH US OR NOT, BUT WE'RE GOING.
FINE. BUT WE SEE PEOPLE IN DANGER, WE STOP TO HELP. THAT'S JUST ORDINARY HUMAN DECENCY.
DECENCY. YOU DO REMEMBER YOU'RE TALKING TO FRANK CASTLE?
LOOK OVER THERE. ISN'T THAT WHERE WE LEFT THE GUYS I WEBBED UP? WE SHOULD CHECK IT OUT.
THE ALIENS MUST HAVE GOTTEN THEM. NOTHING WE CAN DO FOR THEM NOW.

DRINCK
AAAGH!
ID RECORD

WAAAAIT A MINUTE.
IT WAS THE DEVIL'S *ADVOCATE*. DEVIL'S OWN WAS THAT BRAD PITT MOVIE. VENOM'S AN IDIOT.
HEEEELLLLPPP!!!

LOOK! OH THANK GOD. WE'RE GOING TO BE ALL RIGHT.
SAVE US, SPIDER-MAN!
÷SIGH÷
I'M COMING, PIZZA PLACE. JUST HOLD ON FOR ME.
JUST HOLD ON!


THE SUB.
OOOOH. WHAT IS THAT?
MILLIONS OF PEOPLE, ALL SUDDENLY THINKING ABOUT DEATH. AND SO CLOSE.
SO CLOSE.

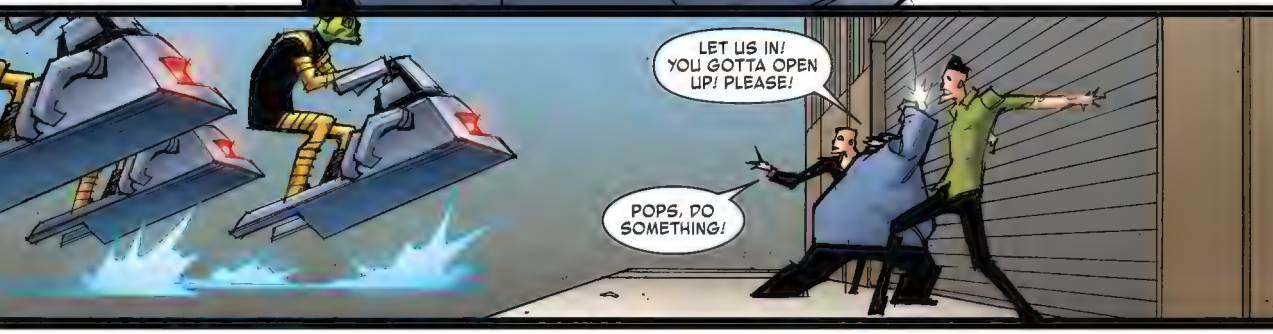
WHERE THE HELL HAVE YOU BEEN? DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE CITY?
WHAT?
AN ALIEN ATTACK. THOUSANDS OF SHIPS.
OH NO, REALLY? AND WITH THE AVENGERS GONE...
KLIK
SURFACING. SURFACING. SURFACING.
WHAT THE HELL? NO! WE'LL BE EXPOSED. THOSE THINGS WILL BE ALL OVER US!
YOU THINK SO?

"I BET NO ONE WILL EVEN NOTICE US."

SIXTEEN

RUN, BOYS! DON'T LOOK BACK!
WE'RE ALMOST THERE!

SOUTH BRONX,
THE PAGURO STRONGHOLD.
THERE!


LET US IN! YOU GOTTA OPEN UP! PLEASE!
POPS, DO SOMETHING!

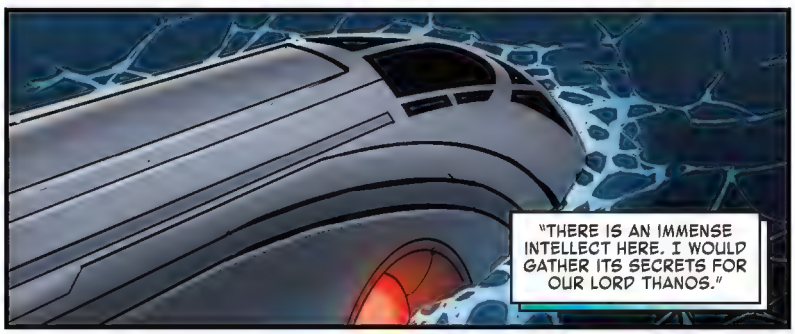
"I CALL THE PRETTY ONE."

BANG
BANG
BANG

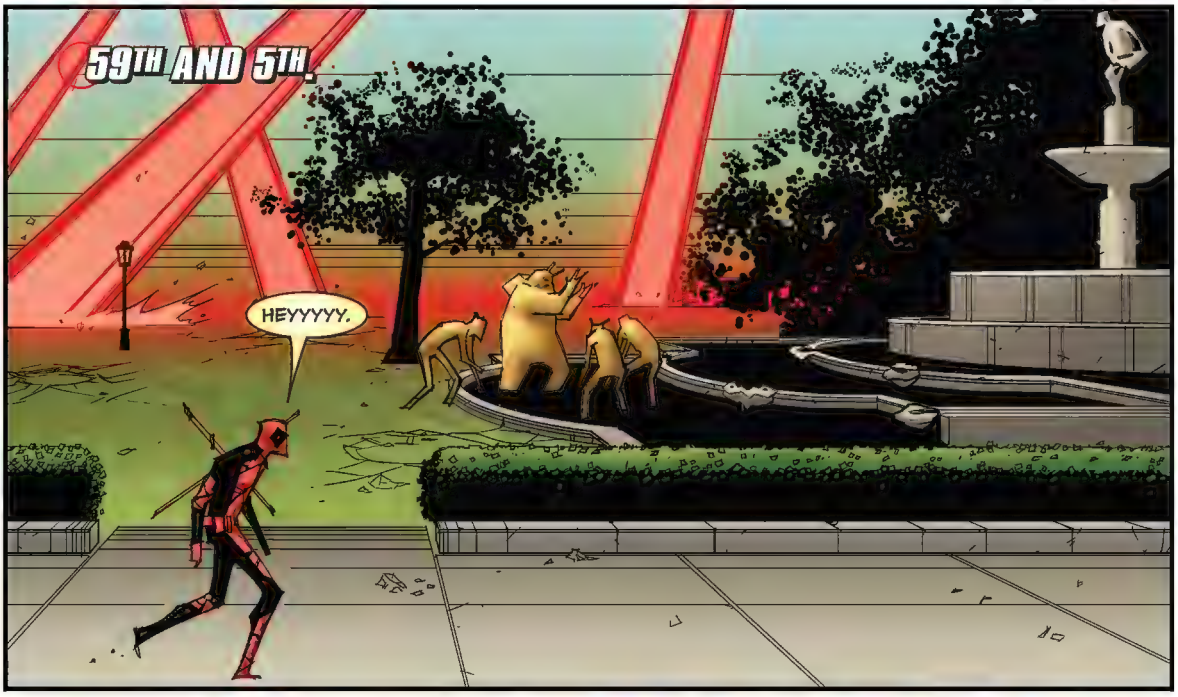
WHAT ARE YOU MOOKS THINKING, BRINGING THOSE FREAKS OVER HERE? YOU OUGHTA KNOW BETTER.
IT'S AN ALIEN INVASION! WE DIDN'T BRING 'EM--THEY'RE EVERYWHERE!
COME ON, OPEN UP. THE PAGUROS GOT THE ONLY SAFE PLACE IN THE WHOLE BRONX.
SORRY, GORDO. WE GOT SPECIFIC ORDERS. ONLY PAYING CLIENTS GET IN.
AND YOU AND YOUR BOYS AIN'T PAYING CLIENTS. GET THE HELL OUT OF HERE BEFORE WE SHOOT YOU TOO.
YOU REALLY THINK WE SHOULD BE TRYING TO GET IN HERE, POPS? WE JUST TOLD THE PUNISHER ABOUT THIS PLACE. HE'LL BE COMING HERE.
HIM AND HIS TWO CRAZY FRIENDS. I WOULDN'T MIND SEEING THE LADY AGAIN, BUT I GOTTA TELL YA, NOT A FAN OF THE TERRIFYING SPIDER-MAN.
I HEAR YOU, BOYS, BUT WE AIN'T GOT NO CHOICE! WE STAY OUT HERE WE GET EATEN BY ALIENS! IF WE GET IN, AT LEAST WE GOT SOME PROTECTION.
ANYWAY, CARMEN, YOU JUST GAVE ME AN IDEA.
HEY! TELL MR. PAGURO I GOT NEWS FOR HIM--NEWS HE'S GONNA WANNA HEAR! ABOUT THE PUNISHER!
VRRRR--CHAK
COULDN'T EVEN OPEN IT ALL THE WAY FOR US.
%&*%&# PAGUROS.

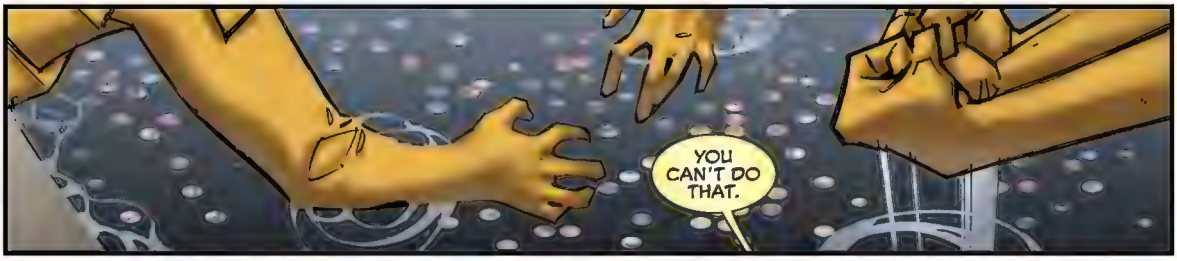
RRARGH!
THE EAST RIVER.

KEEP THE RED MONSTER BUSY. I WILL NEED SOME TIME.
YES, MISTRESS.

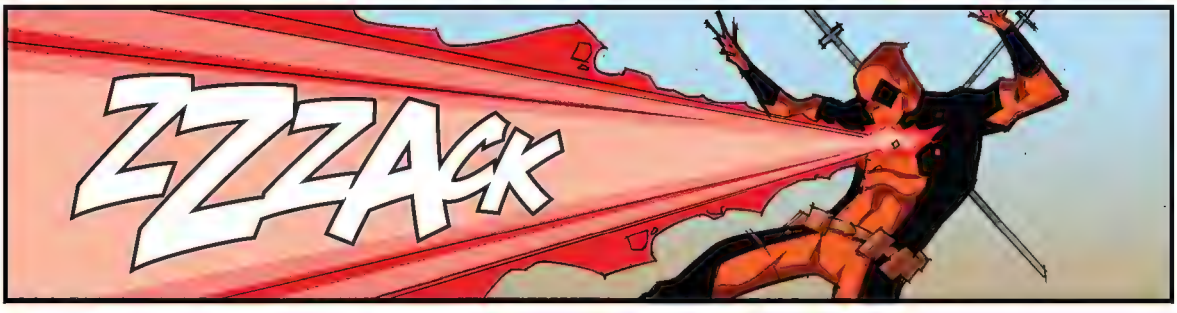

"THERE IS AN IMMENSE INTELLECT HERE. I WOULD GATHER ITS SECRETS FOR OUR LORD THANOS."

KRRRAACK
AAAAH!
MY NAME IS SUPERGIANT, OF THE BLACK ORDER OF LORD THANOS. WHO ARE YOU?
S-STERNS. SAMUEL STERNS. THANOS IS H-HERE?
NOT YET. BUT HE IS COMING.
YOU SHOULD BE PROUD, SAMUEL STERNS. I SERVE THANOS BY FINDING POWERFUL MINDS AND TAKING THEIR SECRETS FOR MY MASTER.
YOU, I SMELLED RIGHT AWAY.

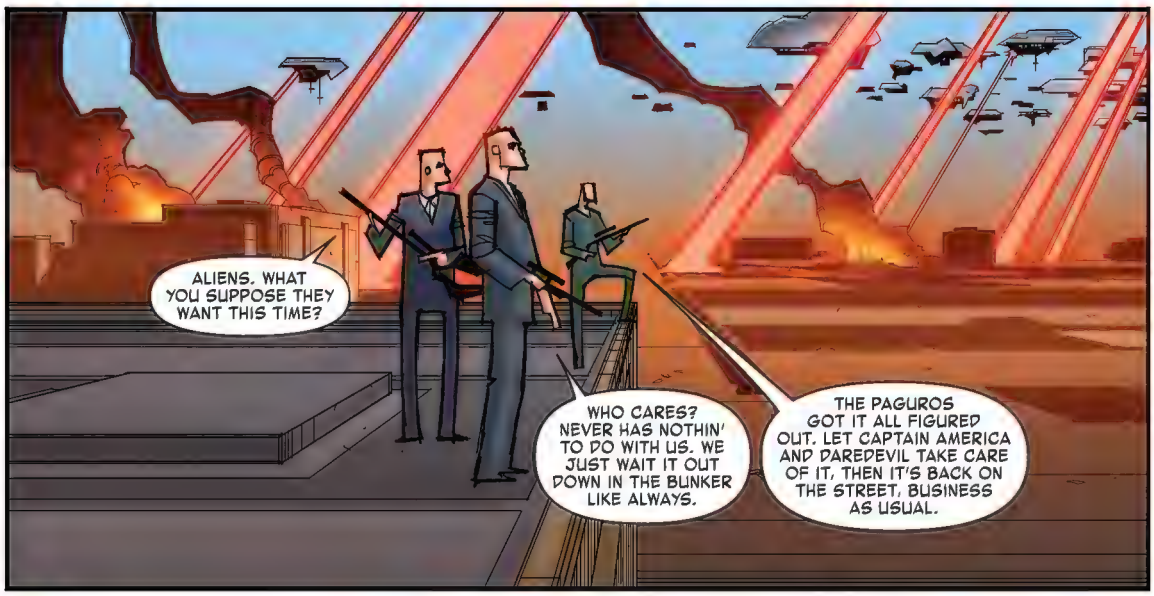

59TH AND 5TH.
HEYYYYY.


YOU CAN'T DO THAT.

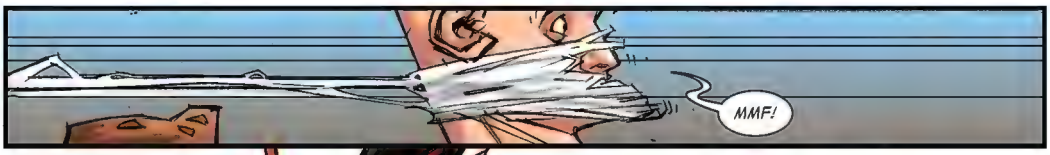
THOSE ARE PEOPLE'S--

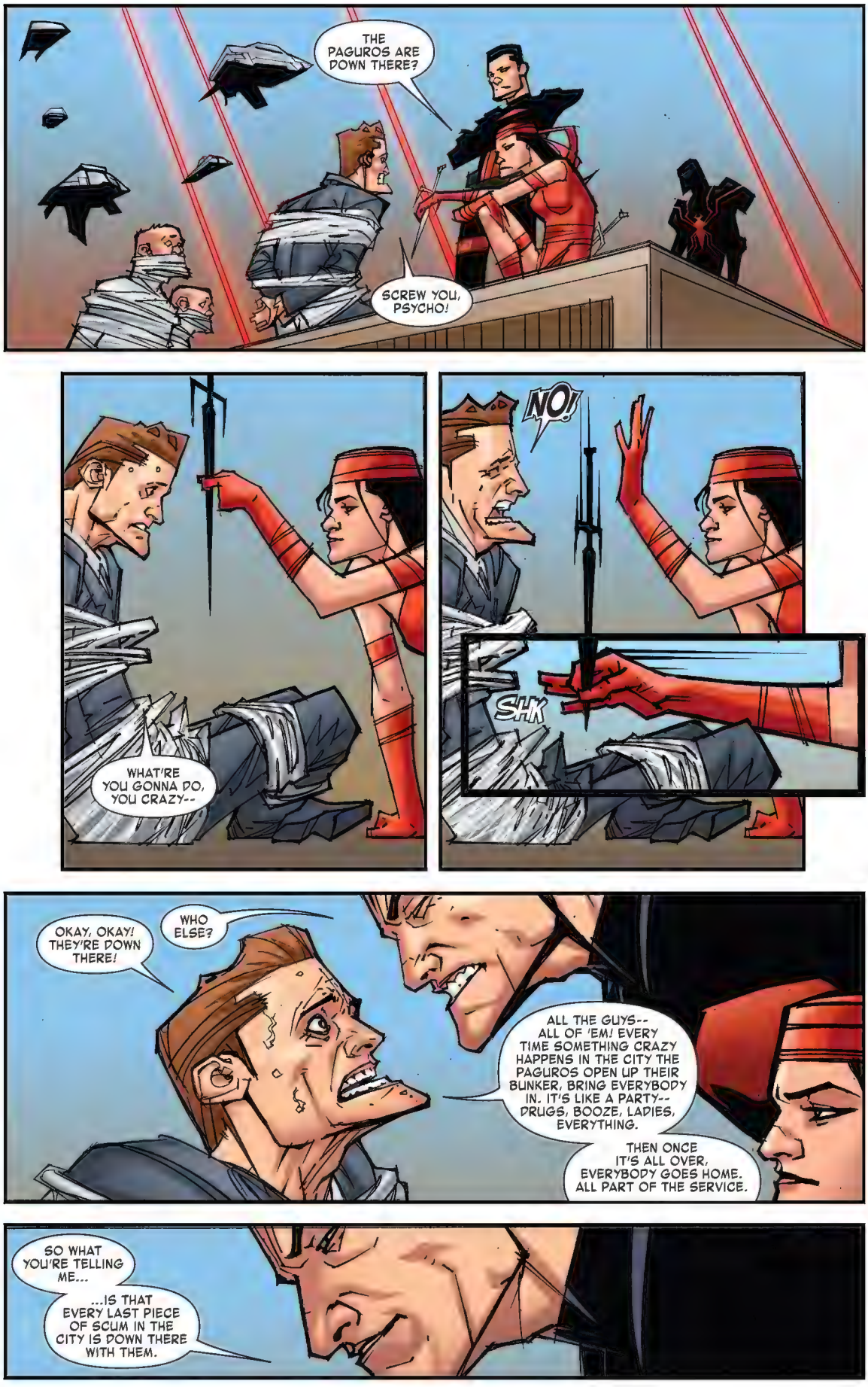

ZZZACK

"THAT WAS SPIDER-MAN, RIGHT? I DON'T KNOW WHY THE OTHERS TOLD US TO WATCH OUT FOR HIM. SEEMED LIKE KIND OF A WIM--"
KRRK!
THOSE ARE PEOPLE'S WISHES.
YOU DON'T STEAL PEOPLE'S WISHES!!!

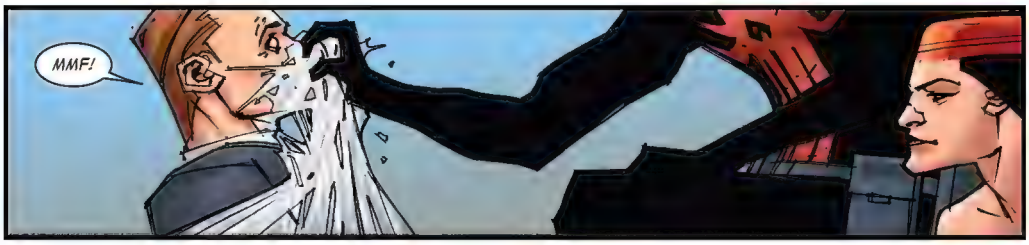

ALIENS. WHAT YOU SUPPOSE THEY WANT THIS TIME?
WHO CARES? NEVER HAS NOTHIN' TO DO WITH US. WE JUST WAIT IT OUT DOWN IN THE BUNKER LIKE ALWAYS.
THE PAGUROS GOT IT ALL FIGURED OUT. LET CAPTAIN AMERICA AND DAREDEVIL TAKE CARE OF IT, THEN IT'S BACK ON THE STREET, BUSINESS AS USUAL.

YOU REALLY THINK DAREDEVIL GETS INVOLVED WITH SPACE CRAP LIKE THIS? I DUNNO. HE'S ALL LIKE... STREET-LEVEL AND S--


MMF!


THE PAGUROS ARE DOWN THERE?
SCREW YOU, PSYCHO!
WHAT'RE YOU GONNA DO, YOU CRAZY--
NO!
SHK
OKAY, OKAY! THEY'RE DOWN THERE!
WHO ELSE?
ALL THE GUYS-- ALL OF 'EM! EVERY TIME SOMETHING CRAZY HAPPENS IN THE CITY THE PAGUROS OPEN UP THEIR BUNKER, BRING EVERYBODY IN. IT'S LIKE A PARTY-- DRUGS, BOOZE, LADIES, EVERYTHING.
THEN ONCE IT'S ALL OVER, EVERYBODY GOES HOME. ALL PART OF THE SERVICE.
SO WHAT YOU'RE TELLING ME...
...IS THAT EVERY LAST PIECE OF SCUM IN THE CITY IS DOWN THERE WITH THEM.

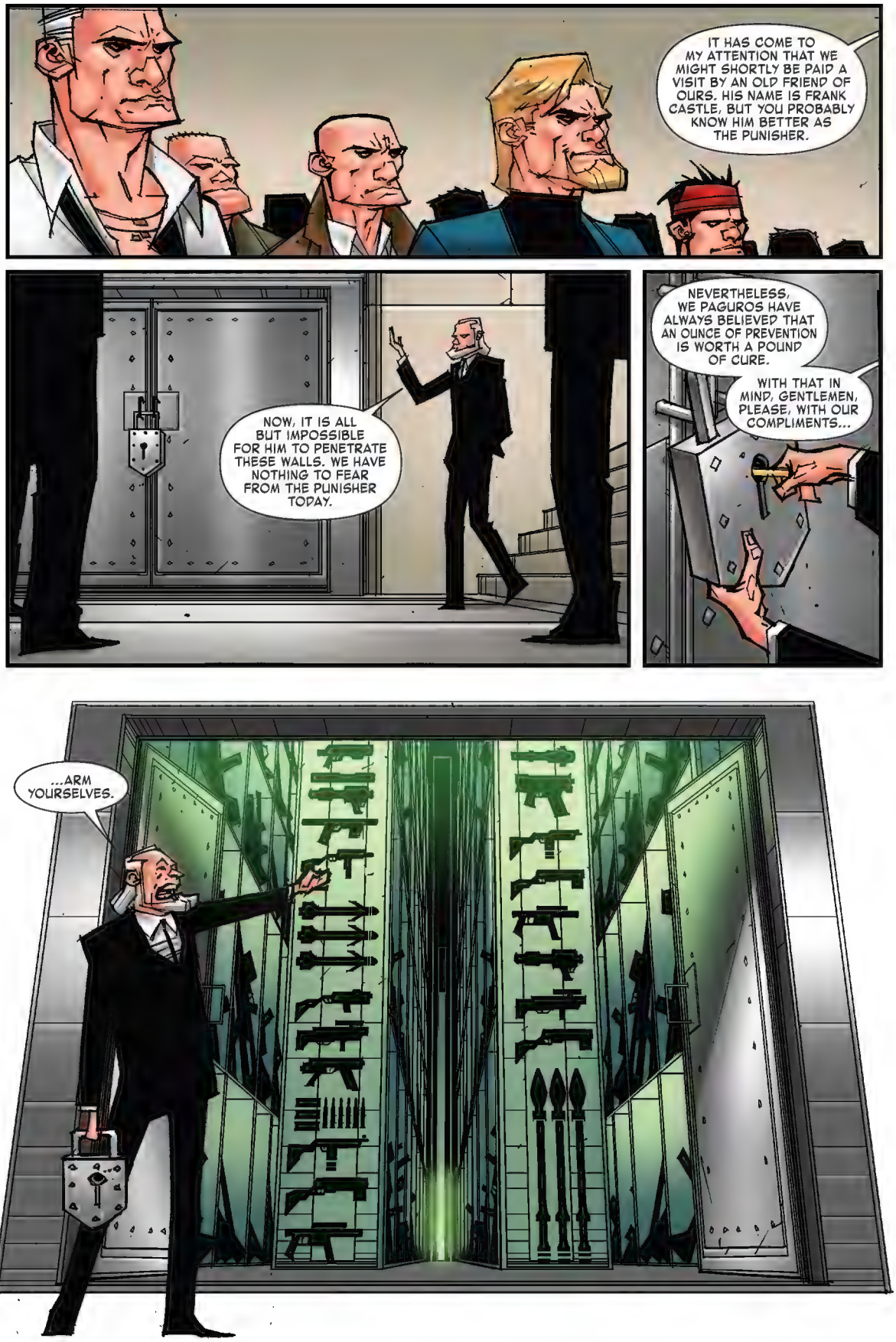
"WELL, I WOULDN'T PUT IT EXACTLY THAT WAY, BUT YEAH. DOESN'T MATTER, THOUGH. YOU AIN'T GETTIN' IN.
"THEY LOCKED IT DOWN A FEW HOURS AGO. THIS LOOKS LIKE A CRAPPY WAREHOUSE FROM THE OUTSIDE, BUT THE DOORS ARE ALL TRIPLE REINFORCED STEEL.
"THEY BUILT IT TO KEEP OUT ANYTHING EXCEPT MAYBE THE HULK. HOW DO *YOU* THINK YOU'RE GONNA GET IN?"
NOBIS EST DOMI

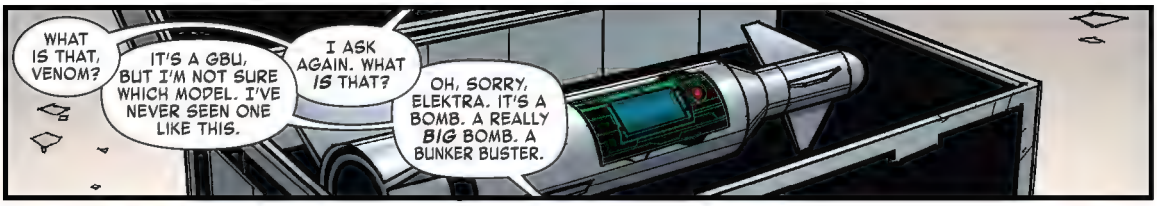

MMF!

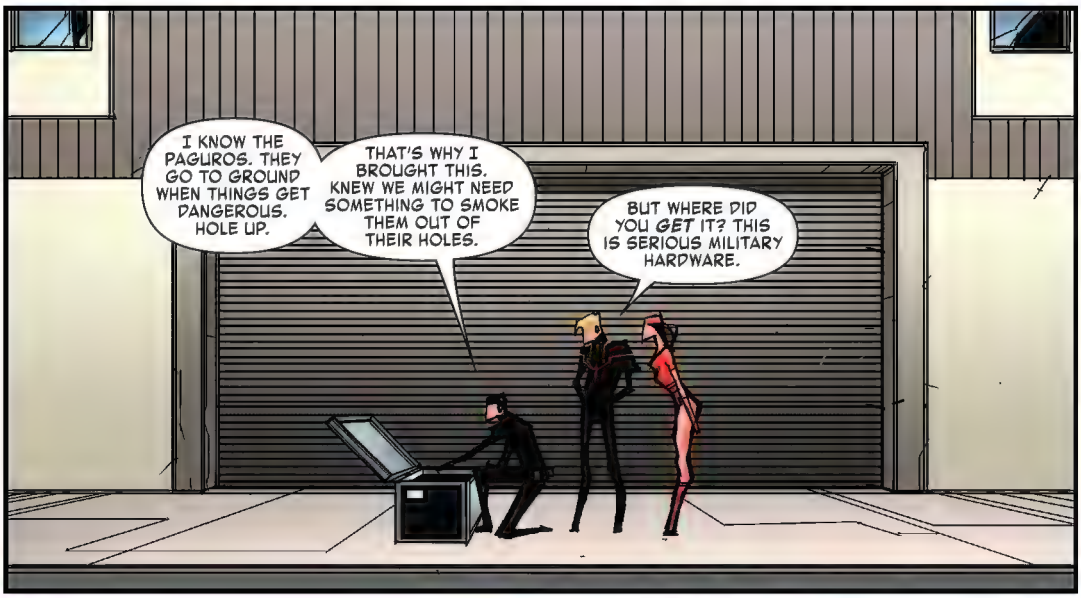
ROSS. THIS IS CASTLE. OPERATION IS A GO. WE NEED YOU.
ROSS? COME IN.
VENOM. HEAD BACK TO THE VAN. BRING THE TRUNK.
ELEKTRA, MAKE SURE OUR FRIENDS HERE ARE COMFORTABLE.
THE TRUNK? WOULDN'T HULK BE A BETTER--
APPARENTLY, ROSS HAS SOMETHING BETTER TO DO.

I'M DONE RELYING ON SUPER-POWERS. SHOULD'VE KNOWN BETTER.
GO GET THE TRUNK.

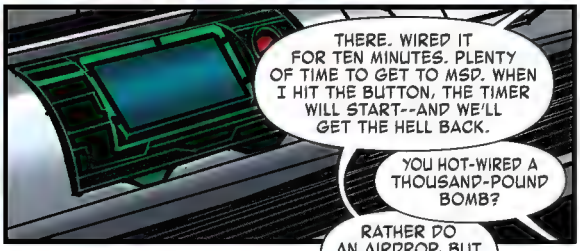
SO YOU SEE, MR. PAGURO, THE PUNISHER WAS ASKING ABOUT YOU, WANTED TO KNOW WHERE YOU WERE. AND HE AIN'T ALONE, EITHER. HE'S GOT THIS *THING* WITH HIM--REAL SCARY. AND A WOMAN TOO.
SHE WAS MAYBE EVEN SCARIER THAN THE MONSTER THING.
I SEE. AND WHAT DID YOU TELL HIM, MR. NOBILI?
WE DIDN'T TELL 'IM *NOTHIN'*, MR. PAGURO!
NOT ONE THING. WE WOULD *NEVER*.
GENTLEMEN! MAY I HAVE YOUR ATTENTION, PLEASE?
:SIGH:


IT HAS COME TO MY ATTENTION THAT WE MIGHT SHORTLY BE PAID A VISIT BY AN OLD FRIEND OF OURS. HIS NAME IS FRANK CASTLE, BUT YOU PROBABLY KNOW HIM BETTER AS THE PUNISHER.
NOW, IT IS ALL BUT IMPOSSIBLE FOR HIM TO PENETRATE THESE WALLS. WE HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR FROM THE PUNISHER TODAY.
NEVERTHELESS, WE PAGUROS HAVE ALWAYS BELIEVED THAT AN OUNCE OF PREVENTION IS WORTH A POUND OF CURE.
WITH THAT IN MIND, GENTLEMEN, PLEASE, WITH OUR COMPLIMENTS...
...ARM YOURSELVES.

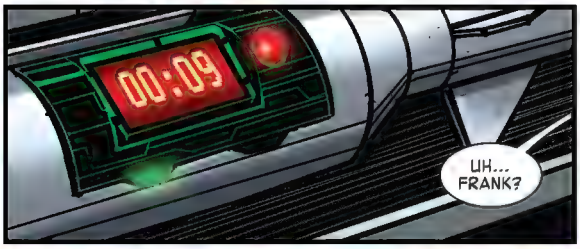

WHAT IS THAT, VENOM?
IT'S A GBU, BUT I'M NOT SURE WHICH MODEL. I'VE NEVER SEEN ONE LIKE THIS.
I ASK AGAIN. WHAT *IS* THAT?
OH, SORRY, ELEKTRA. IT'S A BOMB. A REALLY *BIG* BOMB. A BUNKER BUSTER.

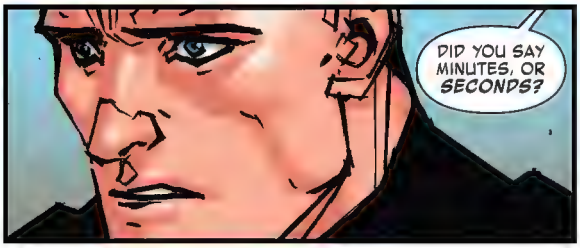

I KNOW THE PAGUROS. THEY GO TO GROUND WHEN THINGS GET DANGEROUS. HOLE UP.
THAT'S WHY I BROUGHT THIS. KNEW WE MIGHT NEED SOMETHING TO SMOKE THEM OUT OF THEIR HOLES.
BUT WHERE DID YOU *GET* IT? THIS IS SERIOUS MILITARY HARDWARE.

I DID A JOB FOR NICK FURY YEARS AGO.
AND HE *GAVE* THIS TO YOU? WHAT, AS PAYMENT?
I WOULDN'T SAY HE *GAVE* IT TO ME, NO.
HMM. MANUAL ARMING MECHANISM...THIS THING IS STRANGE. NEED TO SHIFT IT FROM ALTITUDE-BASED TO TIMER-BASED. TRICKY, BUT...


THERE. WIRED IT FOR TEN MINUTES. PLENTY OF TIME TO GET TO MSD. WHEN I HIT THE BUTTON, THE TIMER WILL START--AND WE'LL GET THE HELL BACK.
YOU HOT-WIRED A THOUSAND-POUND BOMB?
RATHER DO AN AIRDROP, BUT I DON'T HAVE A PLANE.

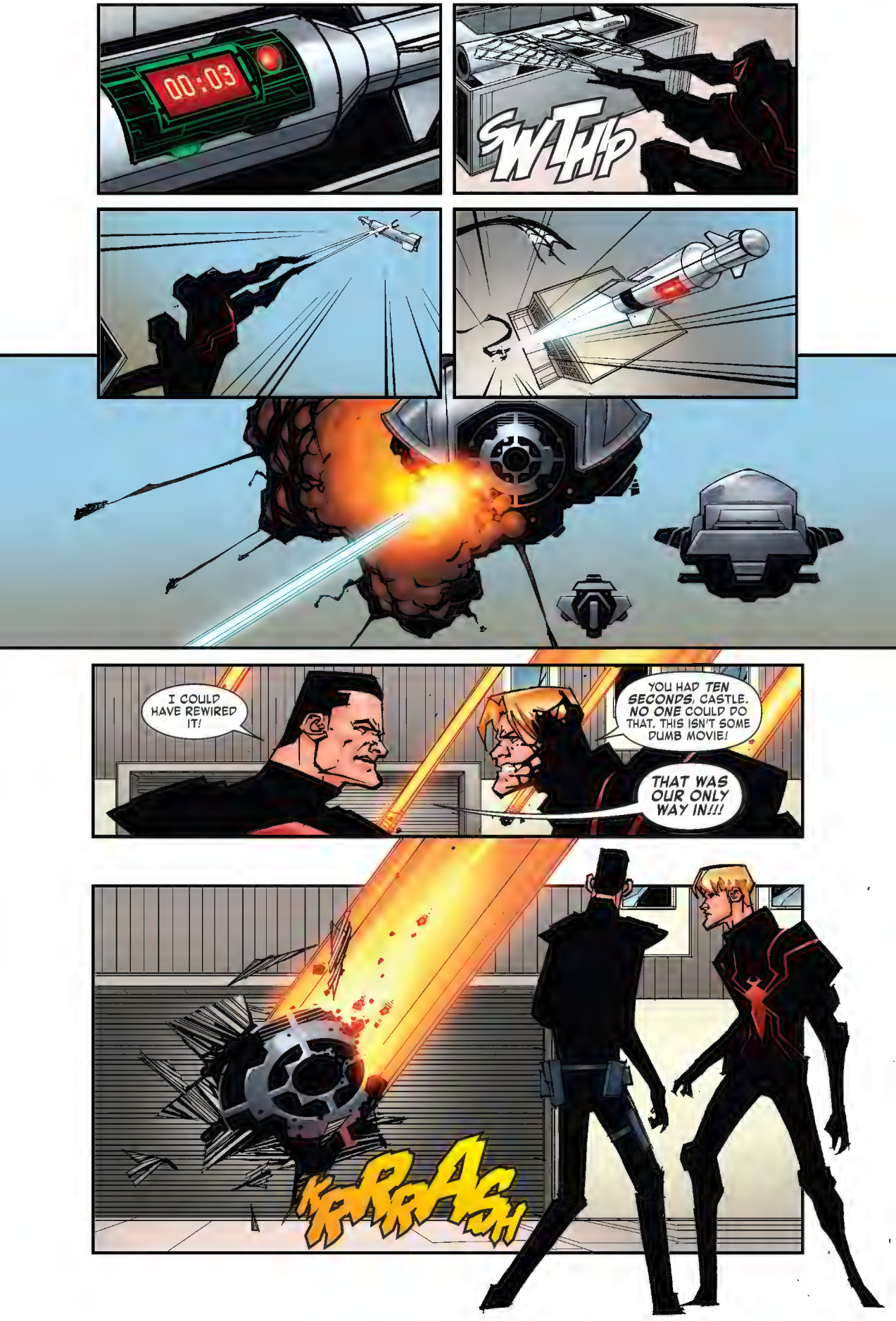
00:10
KLK


00:09
UH... FRANK?


DID YOU SAY MINUTES, OR *SECONDS?*

YES--YES! GIVE IT TO ME! GIVE ME YOUR BIG, DELICIOUS MIND!
AAAGH!
DAMMIT!
GET OFF!
STOP THAT, PLEASE. HE IS MINE.
I FIND HIM INTERESTING. DEATH SURROUNDS HIM LIKE A SHROUD.
HOW DARE YOU? I AM SUPERGIANT, OF THE BLACK ORDER, LIEUTENANT OF THE MAD TITAN, THANOS. WHO ARE YOU TO COMMAND M--

MISTRESS!
SAVE THE MISTRESS!
FIND HER!
STERNS!
TAKE HIM. DEATH COMES TO THE CITY. I AM NEEDED, TO HASTEN ITS ARRIVAL.
UUUUHHH.
STERNS--MERCY SAID DEATH'S COMING TO THE CITY. DID SHE MEAN DEATH TO THE ALIENS, OR TO THE PEOPLE?
YOU KNOW, GENERAL--
--I DON'T THINK SHE CARES.


00:03
SWTHP
I COULD HAVE REWIRED IT!
YOU HAD TEN SECONDS, CASTLE. NO ONE COULD DO THAT. THIS ISN'T SOME DUMB MOVIE!
THAT WAS OUR ONLY WAY IN!!!
KRRRASH

I WISH... I WISH...
OH, BETTER NOT SAY IT OUT LOUD.
IT WON'T COME TRUE.
YOU WANT TO TAKE ME UPTOWN? THERE'S THIS PIZZA PLACE I'M TRYING TO GET TO, AND THEY SHUT DOWN THE TRAINS.
SURE, PAL. I SAW WHAT YOU DID TO THOSE BAD GUYS. I HAVE A FEELING I'M SAFER WITH YOU THAN ANYPLACE ELSE.
ONWARD!

WHAT THE $^&%* DO YOU LITTLE RATS THINK YOU'RE DOING?
UHHH...
YOU THINK YOU CAN JUST SIT BACK AND DO NOTHING WHILE WE RISK OUR $^&ES TO SAVE YOU FROM THE PUNISHER?
HEY, FELLAS, LISTEN. ME AND MY BOYS, WE'RE MORE LIKE...LOGISTICAL TYPES, YOU KNOW? WE AIN'T MUCH FOR THE FIGHTING.
I'M GONNA BE VERY CLEAR HERE. YOU PICK UP GUNS AND HELP, OR WE WILL SHOOT YOU IN THE FACE.
YOU *AND* YOUR SONS, YOU FAT PIECE OF GARBAGE.
YOU CAN'T TALK TO MY POPS LIKE THAT! HE'S A NOBILI--THAT NAME *MEANS* SOMETHING!
NOBILI?
AAGH!
WHAM
I'D SAY NOBODIES.

WELL. THAT'S A BIG GROUP OF...AH... HEAVILY ARMED CRIMINALS. SHOULDN'T WE WAIT FOR HULK AND DEADPOOL? ISN'T THAT THE POINT OF THIS, THAT WE DO IT TOGETHER?
NO. THEY'RE ALL HERE. *ALL OF THE SCUM.* ALL IN ONE PLACE.

IT'S *PERFECT.*

MADISON SQUARE PARK.
KEEP UP, STERNS! DO I HAVE TO CARRY YOU?
NO...I JUST... WHATEVER THAT WOMAN DID TO ME IN THE SUB, SHE HURT MY BRAIN, THADDEUS. I CAN'T THINK.
IF YOU CAN'T THINK, THEN YOU'RE NO GOOD TO ME. PULL IT TOGETHER, STERNS.
MERCY'S UP THERE. WE LET HER OUT. SHE'S OUR RESPONSIBILITY.
WHATEVER SHE'S DOING...

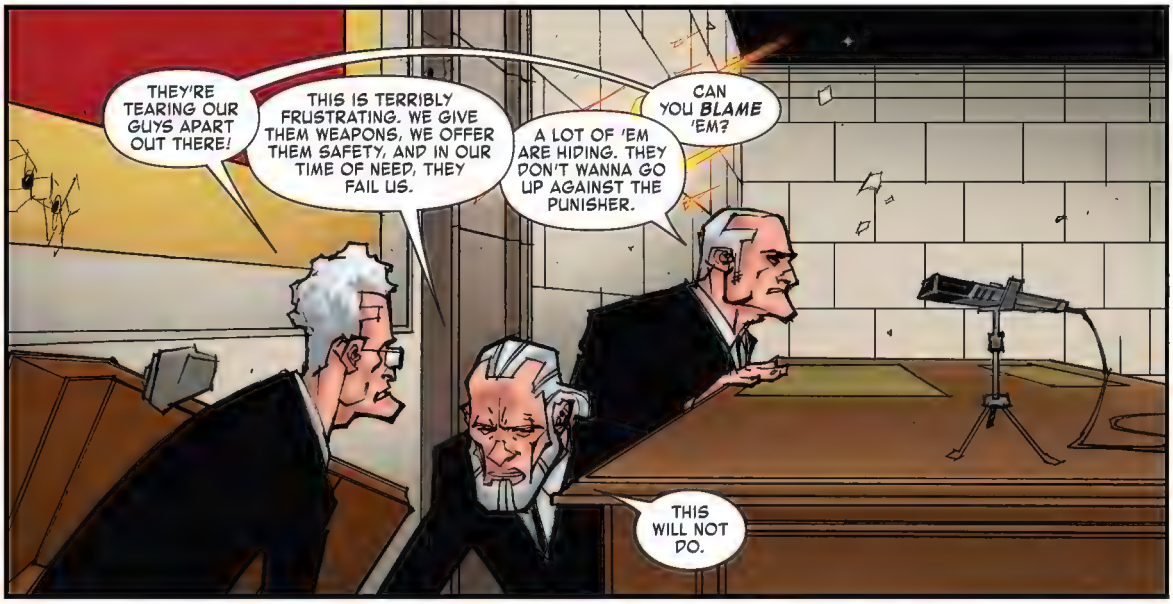
"...IT'S OUR JOB TO STOP HER."
ALL RIGHT. CAN YOU... PUNCH HER OR SOMETH--
BOOOOM
FANTASTIC.

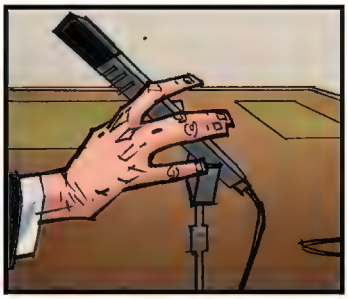
KA-THOOM
THAT'S GOTTA BE THE FLAGSHIP. IT'S GOING TO *RIP THIS CITY APART.* HAVE TO TAKE IT DOWN.
CAN YOU...DO THAT? IT'S AWFULLY... LARGE.
NOT QUICKLY ENOUGH. NOT BY MYSELF. I NEED MORE FIREPOWER.
WHERE ARE WE SUPPOSED TO GET *THAT?*
WELL...

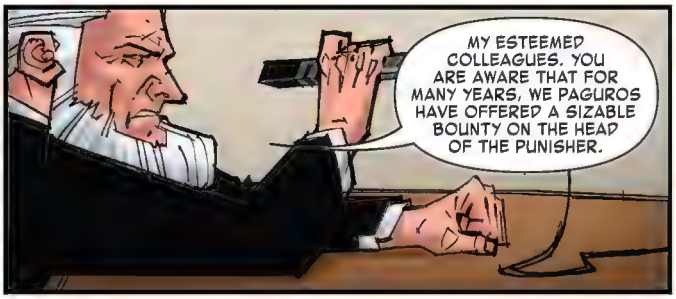
STERNS! I NEED A PLAN. I NEED MERCY TO DESTROY THAT SHIP FOR ME, AND I NEED IT TO HAPPEN NOW.
KRRACK
I TOLD YOU-- I CAN'T THINK! DON'T YOU SEE? I'M FALLING APART!
I HAVE TO UPLINK WITH MY SECOND BRAIN-- REBOOT MY WETWARE, OR I WON'T BE ABLE TO COME UP WITH ANYTHING AT ALL.
SMASH
AND HOW DO WE DO THAT, EXACTLY?
KLANG
I NEED TO ACCESS THE INTERNET. MY SECOND BRAIN IS ON THE INTERNET.
INTERNET. SMARTEST AND DUMBEST THING ON THE PLANET. PERFECT PLACE FOR YOU, STERNS.
OKAY, LET'S GO FIND YOU SOME INTERNET.

VENOM, YOU AND I WILL LEAD THE ATTACK. I'LL TAKE RIGHT, YOU TAKE LEFT. ELEKTRA, YOU COVER THE REAR. THEY'LL TRY TO RUN AWAY--IT'S WHAT THEY DO--BUT DON'T LET ANYONE PAST YOU.
DONE.
WHAT, CASTLE, WE JUST WORK OUR WAY BACK?
JOBS DON'T GET EASIER THAN THIS. IF IT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE ME, AND IT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE ELEKTRA, KILL IT.
...IT? WE DON'T KNOW THAT ALL OF THESE PEOPLE ACTUALLY DESERVE TO DIE. OR ANY OF THEM.
IF THEY'RE HERE, THEY DESERVE IT. DO WHAT YOU WANT, THOMPSON. JUST HANDLE THE LEFT.
THE PAGUROS WILL BE AT THE BACK OF THE ROOM. HIDING LIKE THEY ALWAYS DO. THEY'RE OUR PRIMARY TARGET. IF YOU SEE A CHANCE TO NAIL THEM, TAKE IT.
HERE. IN CASE YOU NEED IT.
I'M BETTER WITH THESE.
I DON'T DOUBT THAT.
GET READY. THIS IS OUR CHANCE TO DO SOMETHING TRULY MEANINGFUL.
WE CAN KILL THEM ALL.

KRRNCH
BANG
THWIP
BANG
SNAP


THEY'RE TEARING OUR GUYS APART OUT THERE!
THIS IS TERRIBLY FRUSTRATING. WE GIVE THEM WEAPONS, WE OFFER THEM SAFETY, AND IN OUR TIME OF NEED, THEY FAIL US.
A LOT OF 'EM ARE HIDING. THEY DON'T WANNA GO UP AGAINST THE PUNISHER.
CAN YOU BLAME 'EM?
THIS WILL NOT DO.



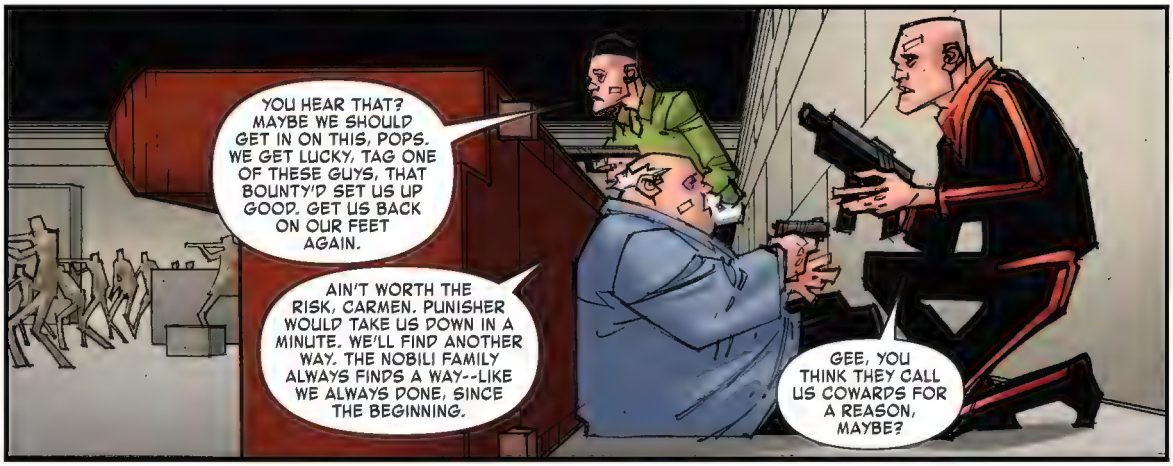

MY ESTEEMED COLLEAGUES. YOU ARE AWARE THAT FOR MANY YEARS, WE PAGUROS HAVE OFFERED A SIZABLE BOUNTY ON THE HEAD OF THE PUNISHER.

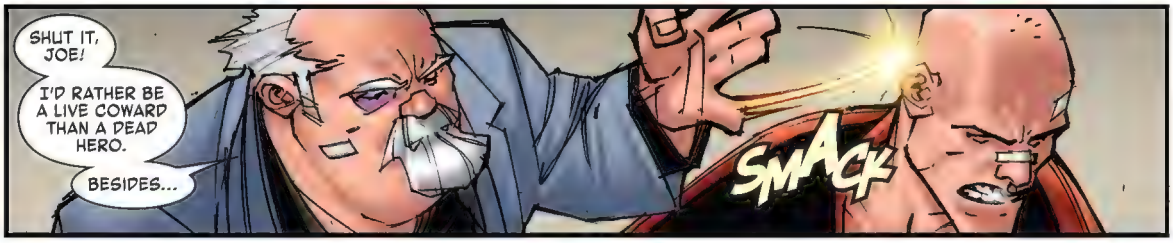
AS OF THIS MOMENT, CONSIDER THAT BOUNTY TRIPLED, AND APPLICABLE TO EACH OF OUR ATTACKERS IN TURN.

THE PUNISHER...

...HIS PET MONSTER...

...AND THAT $%&* BY THE EXIT.


YOU HEAR THAT? MAYBE WE SHOULD GET IN ON THIS, POPS. WE GET LUCKY, TAG ONE OF THESE GUYS, THAT BOUNTY'D SET US UP GOOD. GET US BACK ON OUR FEET AGAIN.
AIN'T WORTH THE RISK, CARMEN. PUNISHER WOULD TAKE US DOWN IN A MINUTE. WE'LL FIND ANOTHER WAY. THE NOBILI FAMILY ALWAYS FINDS A WAY--LIKE WE ALWAYS DONE, SINCE THE BEGINNING.
GEE, YOU THINK THEY CALL US COWARDS FOR A REASON, MAYBE?


SHUT IT, JOE!
I'D RATHER BE A LIVE COWARD THAN A DEAD HERO.
BESIDES...
SMACK

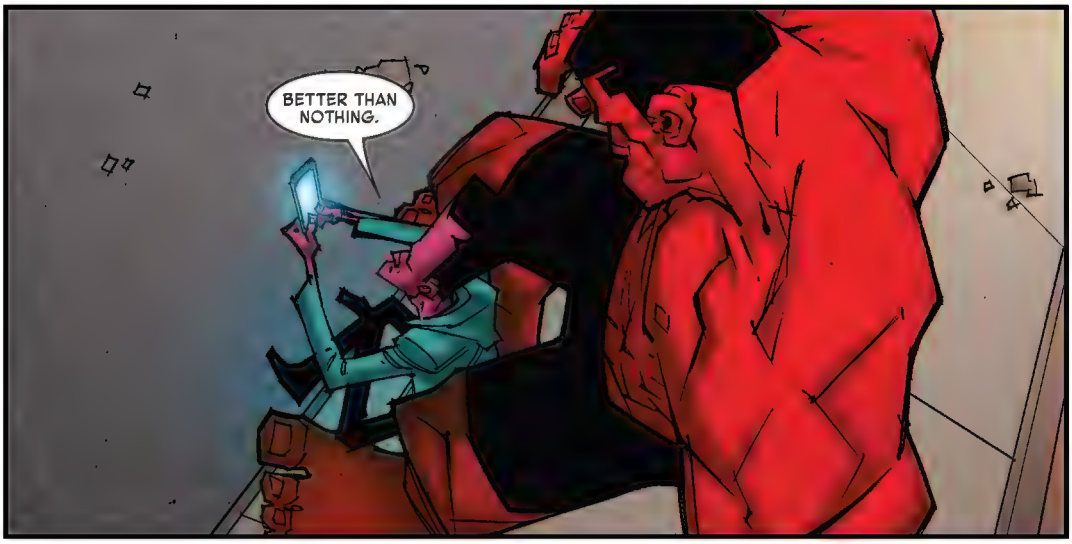
"...EITHER OF YOU *REALLY* WANT TO GET IN THE MIDDLE OF THAT?
"LIKE STICKING YOUR FACE IN A %^&%* BLENDER."

AAAAND, HERE WE ARE.
PERFECT, MY GOOD MAN.
PIZZA
THAT'LL BE THREE HUNDRED BUCKS, PAL.
EXCUSE ME?
FROM 59TH ALL THE WAY UPTOWN? YOU BETTER BELIEVE THAT'S THREE HUNDRED. NOW, YOU GONNA PAY UP, OR DO I GOTTA CALL A COP?
EASY, EASY!
BANG
AAAH!
LIKE I SAID, FREE OF CHARGE! ENJOY YOUR STAY IN OUR FINE CITY!
UH-HUH.

FINALLY!!!
THREE SLICES, PLEASE.
IS THAT--
GUYS, GUYS. I'VE BEEN GETTING THIS ALL DAY. I'M NOT SPID--
THAT'S DEADPOOL!
GO, MAN, GO!
UH...

THREE SLICES...$3.25 EACH, THAT'S... $9.75.
DING
THANK YOU, GENEROUS LITTLE SUBWAY GIRL.
AND THAT'S TWENTY-FIVE CENTS CHANGE.
FINALLY.

OUUUUUUCH.
HERE. WILL THIS WORK?
I...
I *THINK* SO. THIS WILL GET ONLINE. BUT I NEED A HUGE DATASTREAM TO PULL ENOUGH INFORMATION OUT OF MY SECOND BRAIN TO REBOOT MYSELF. LET ME SEE HOW MUCH I CAN GET FROM--
ONE BAR? COME ON.



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WHAT NOW?
THOOO

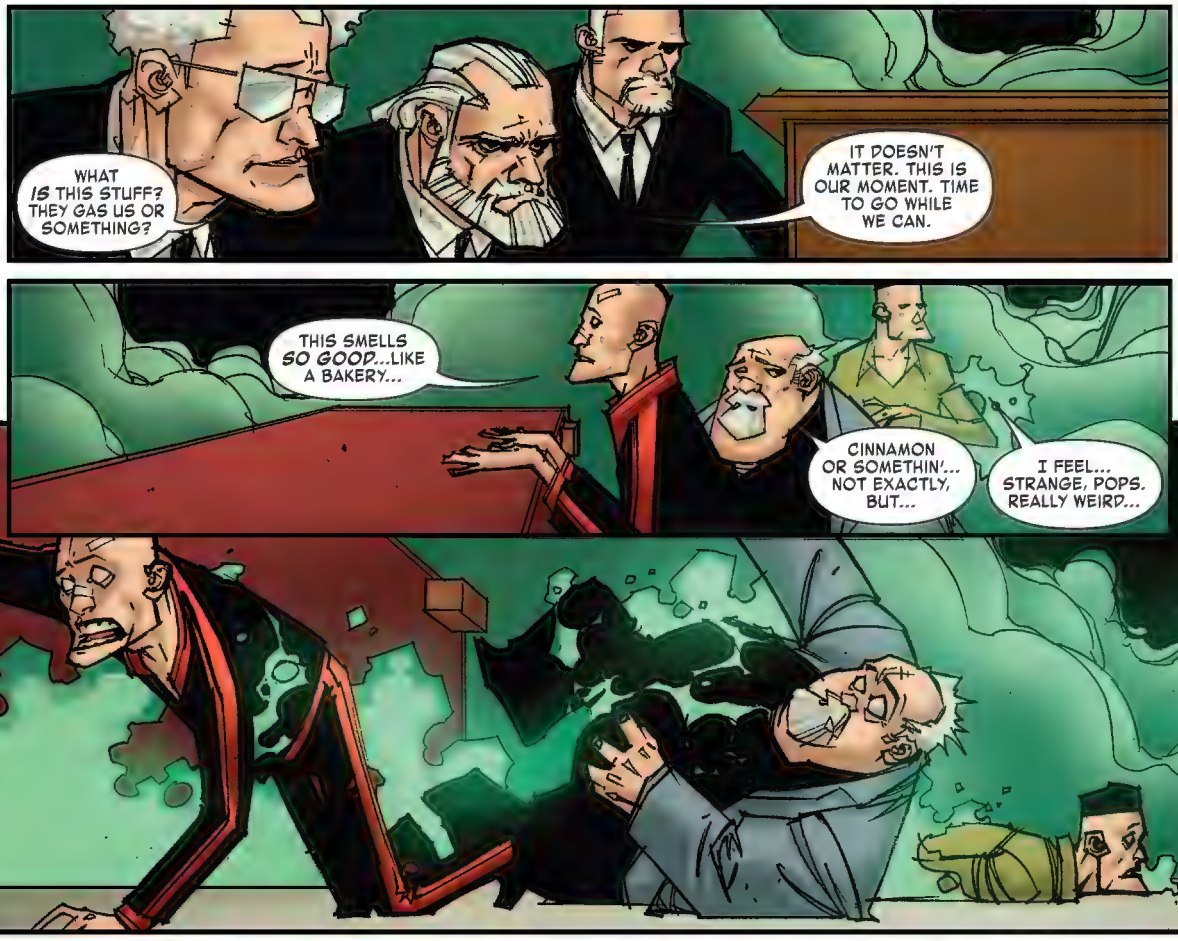
YOU ALL RIGHT?
I'M OKAY FOR NOW. I DIDN'T GET ENOUGH FOR A FULL RESET, BUT I HELD BACK COMPLETE DETERIORATION. FOR A WHILE.
WHAT IS *THIS?*
IT STARTED FALLING WHILE YOU WERE OUT. SOME SORT OF GAS ATTACK, MAYBE. IF IT IS, I DON'T KNOW WHAT WE'RE SUPPOSED TO--
NO.
SNFFF
THIS IS TERRIGEN. IT'S A TRANSMORPHIC. I CAN'T IMAGINE HOW IT GOT TO BE HERE. IT'S EXTREMELY RARE.
DO WE NEED TO WORRY ABOUT IT?
NO. IT ONLY AFFECTS MEMBERS OF THE *INHUMAN* BLOODLINE. THAT'S NOT YOU OR ME. UNLESS SOMETHING VERY STRANGE IS GOING ON, THIS MIST SHOULD HAVE NO EFFECT ON ANYONE ON THIS PLANET.
FINE. BACK TO THE MISSION. I GOT YOU YOUR DAMNED INTERNET. HOW DO WE DEAL WITH MERCY?

YOU WANT MERCY TO ATTACK THE SHIP? JUST MAKE SURE IT'S THE BIGGEST PIT OF DESPAIR AROUND. EVERY LIFE-FORM ON THAT SHIP NEEDS TO WISH FOR DEATH.
I CAN DO THAT.
KRSHH
WHAM
HI THERE.
RRAWK

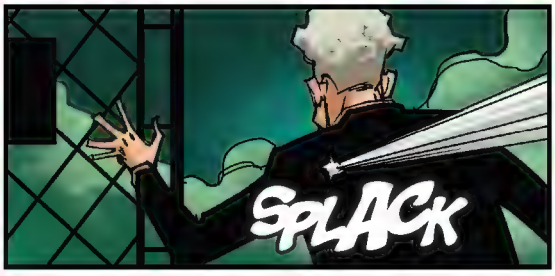
EH?
AHHH.
MMMM...

RRAACH!
CASTLE! I CAN'T-- TOO MANY-- THEY'RE--
SHHHK

BANG BANG BANG
I THOUGHT YOU WERE BETTER WITH KNIVES.
I'M BEST WITH KNIVES. WITH EVERYTHING ELSE, I'M ONLY SPECTACULAR.
VENOM?
HE'S FINE.
RRAAGH!
WHAT IS THIS MIST?
DON'T KNOW. HASN'T KILLED US YET, THOUGH.
BACK TO WORK?
BACK TO WORK.


WHAT IS THIS STUFF? THEY GAS US OR SOMETHING?
IT DOESN'T MATTER. THIS IS OUR MOMENT. TIME TO GO WHILE WE CAN.
THIS SMELLS SO GOOD...LIKE A BAKERY...
CINNAMON OR SOMETHIN'... NOT EXACTLY, BUT...
I FEEL... STRANGE, POPS. REALLY WEIRD...

555555


SPLACK

KRRAK
UHHHH... POPS?
YEAH. I DUNNO, KID.
BUT I LIKE IT.

EIGHTEEN

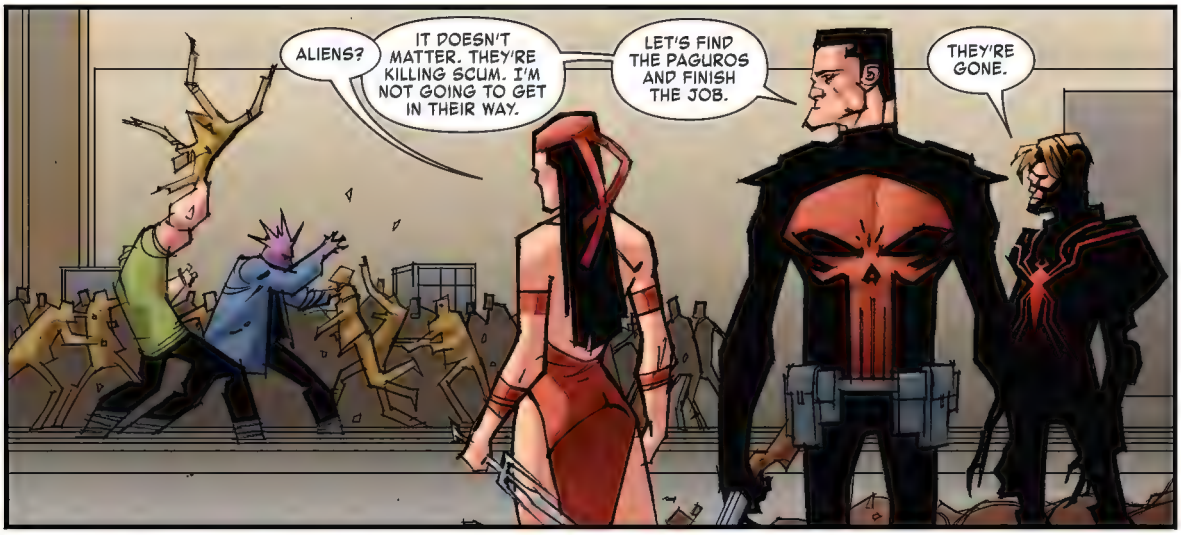
POPS, IS THAT YOU? YOU LOOK...
CARMEN? YOU DON'T LOOK RIGHT EITHER.
NOT RIGHT? HOW DO I NOT LOOK RIGHT? I...HURT. ALL OVER. WHAT HAPPENED TO US?
I DUNNO. I FEEL INCREDIBLE. STRONG.
I CAN SEE IT. CARMEN, POPS--I CAN SEE IT--JUST RIGHT THERE. CAN'T YOU SEE IT?
WATCH. I'LL SHOW YOU.
JOEY...THAT'S BEAUTIFUL. I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE THAT IN MY LIFE. HOW DID YOU DO THAT?
I JUST SAW IT, POPS. YOU KNOW HOW I COULD NEVER GET MY DRAWINGS RIGHT? NOT THE WAY I SAW THEM IN MY HEAD? NOW THEY'RE OUT. I CAN MAKE THEM REAL, AND PERFECT. FOR EVERYONE.
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT. I FEEL SO HAP--
NO!
BLAM

SEE BOYS? I SHOT MYSELF ONE A' THOSE ALIEN INVADERS. PAGUROS BETTER GIVE US A BOUNTY ON THESE THINGS, TOO.
HE WAS MY SON!
HE WASN'T AN ALIEN, YOU %$&*. HE WAS JOSEPH RAYMOND NOBILI. HE NEVER HURT NOBODY. MY BEAUTIFUL BOY, AND NOW YOU KILLED HIM.
MY SON!

POPS, WHAT DID YOU DO?
I AVENGED YOUR BROTHER, CARMEN. I HONORED THE NOBILI LINEAGE. OUR NAME IS ALL WE GOT LEFT, AND WE CAN'T LET IT BE DISRESPECTED.
NOW, YOU AS STRONG AS YOU LOOK?
I...DON'T KNOW?
RRRIPP
YEAH, I GUESS I AM. I FEEL WEIRD. THOUGH. NOT LIKE ME. EVERYTHING'S--
GOOD. I AM, TOO. AND FAST. I CAN FEEL IT.
THEY BEEN BREAKING OUR BALLS FOR YEARS. TIME TO SHOW THEM WHAT THE NOBILI NAME MEANS.
WE'RE GONNA MAKE 'EM BEG FOR FORGIVENESS. ON THEIR KNEES.
OR MAYBE WE'LL JUST MURDER EVERY LAST #$%&^* ONE OF 'EM.

RRAAGH!
SLICE
SSSS
BLAM

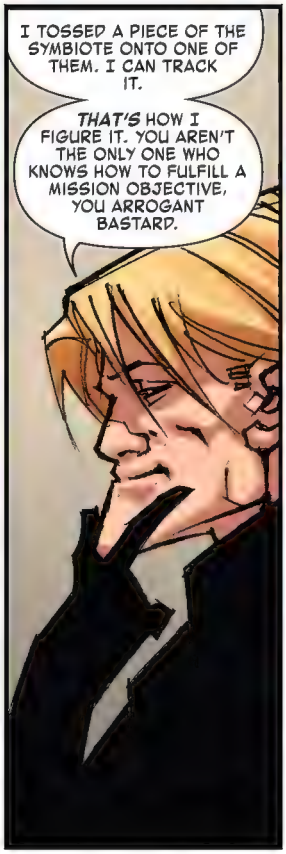
GOOD WORK, THOMPSON. GLAD TO SEE YOU FINALLY FIGURED OUT HOW TO DO THE JOB. THIS IS A *WAR*. IF NOBODY DIES, THEN NOBODY *WINS*.
SCREW YOU, FRANK.
WHAT IS HAPPENING OVER *THERE*?


ALIENS?
IT DOESN'T MATTER. THEY'RE KILLING SCUM. I'M NOT GOING TO GET IN THEIR WAY.
LET'S FIND THE PAGUROS AND FINISH THE JOB.
THEY'RE GONE.

WHAT???
I SAW THEM SNEAK OUT WHEN THE MISTS CAME DOWN.
WHY DIDN'T YOU STOP THEM?

I WAS A LITTLE BUSY KILLING PEOPLE AT THE TIME, CASTLE! ISN'T THAT WHAT YOU WANTED?

THE PAGUROS WERE THE MISSION OBJECTIVE. THEY HIDE. I TOLD YOU THAT. THEY HAVE RATHOLES ALL OVER THE CITY. WE'LL NEVER FIND THEM NOW.
I THINK WE WILL.
HOW DO YOU FIGURE THAT, FLASH?


I TOSSED A PIECE OF THE SYMBIOTE ONTO ONE OF THEM. I CAN TRACK IT.
THAT'S HOW I FIGURE IT. YOU AREN'T THE ONLY ONE WHO KNOWS HOW TO FULFILL A MISSION OBJECTIVE, YOU ARROGANT BASTARD.

FINE. LET'S GO.

YEEEEESSSS.

AND NOW...

MERCY!

THADDEUS ROSS. YOU HAVE BROUGHT ME A GREAT GIFT. SO MANY SOULS GRANTED *RELEASE*.
YOU NEED TO STAY AWAY FROM THE PEOPLE. TAKE AS MANY ALIENS AS YOU WANT--BUT *LEAVE THE PEOPLE ALONE*.
WHY WOULD I DO SUCH A THING? THE SHAPE A SOUL WEARS MATTERS LITTLE TO ME. MY MERCY IS FOR *ALL*.
I CAN HEAR THEM, EVEN NOW. SCREAMING FOR MY GIFT.
I SAID *NO*. I WON'T LET YOU KILL ANYONE ELSE.
HOW WOULD YOU PRESUME TO STOP ME?
I'VE BEEN GETTING PAID TO KILL PEOPLE SINCE I WAS EIGHTEEN YEARS OLD. I'VE GOTTEN VERY GOOD AT IT.
I'LL FIND A WAY.

YOUR THREATS DO NOT INTEREST ME, THADDEUS ROSS. I HAVE WORK TO DO.
YOU'RE MAKING A MISTAKE. IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE THIS WAY.
OH?
I'VE LIVED UP TO MY END OF OUR AGREEMENT, HAVEN'T I? YOU'VE GOTTEN A STEADY STREAM OF DEATH DURING YOUR TIME WITH US.
...YES BUT NEVER ENOUGH.
THERE IS A WAY. I CAN GET YOU AS MUCH AS YOU COULD POSSIBLY NEED OR WANT. MORE. YOU JUST NEED TO DO IT ON MY TERMS.
YES. I CAN SEE IT.
IT MAY BE POSSIBLE.
IT IS POSSIBLE. BUT YOU NEED TO DO SOMETHING FOR ME FIRST.
WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE ME DO?
THE ALIEN INVADERS. DESTROY AS MANY OF THEIR SHIPS AS YOU CAN. PROTECT THE CITY. BUT IF YOU KILL A SINGLE PERSON, NO MATTER HOW DESPERATELY YOU THINK THEY NEED YOU, THE DEAL IS OFF.
DONE.
I WILL FIND YOU, THADDEUS ROSS. WE WILL SPEAK AGAIN SOON.

OKAY, KIDDO, THIS HAS BEEN A *LONG TIME COMING.* TIME TO GET YOU INTO ME. YOU'RE GONNA LIKE IT THERE.
CHEW CHEW CHEW
HMM. NOT BAD, BUT NOTHING *TOO* SPECIAL.
WHY WAS I SO *FOCUSED* ON THIS PLACE?

OH, DEAR.
OHHHHHH, RIGHT.
BANG
BANG
BANG

WE DONE, POPS?
YES, SON, WE'RE DONE FOR NOW.
OKAY. CAN YOU DO SOMETHING FOR ME?
WHAT DO YOU NEED?
IF I DON'T HAVE THE NERVE, CAN YOU DO IT FOR ME?
CARMEN! NO! WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING?
I SAW MY REFLECTION. I KNOW HOW THIS WORKS, POPS. PEOPLE DON'T CHANGE BACK--I'VE SEEN IT. ONCE YOU'RE A FREAK, YOU'RE A FREAK FOREVER. AND I HURT.
I DON'T WANNA BE A MONSTER. I JUST WANNA BE A GUY. WHAT GIRL'S GONNA WANT ME NOW?
I CAN'T, DADDY...I JUST CAN'T.
CARMEN! PLEASE! WE'LL FIGURE SOMETHING OUT! WE CAN--
BANG

GORDON.
...WHO?
IT'S ME, GORDON.
UNCLE... LOUIE?

YOU GOT IT. WE'RE ALL WITH YOU. ALL YOUR FAMILY.
YOUR *LINEAGE.*
YOUR FAMILY MAKES YOU STRONG. WE NOBILI, WE'RE AN *OLD* FAMILY. OLDER THAN YOU CAN IMAGINE. EVERYTHING WE EVER WERE IS TOGETHER IN *YOU* NOW.

WE SAW WHAT HAPPENED TO JOEY AND CARMEN. REAL TRAGEDY, THAT.
YOU DID THE RIGHT THING, THOUGH. NONE OF THESE MOOKS ARE GONNA DISRESPECT THE NOBILI LINE EVER AGAIN.
BUT YOU THINK THE JOB'S REALLY DONE?
BECAUSE HOW WE SEE IT, THERE'S SOMEONE ELSE *RESPONSIBLE.* SOMEONE WHO CAUSED THE WHOLE DAMN DISASTER. SOMEONE WHO'S GOTTA LEARN WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THEY HURT YOUR FAMILY.

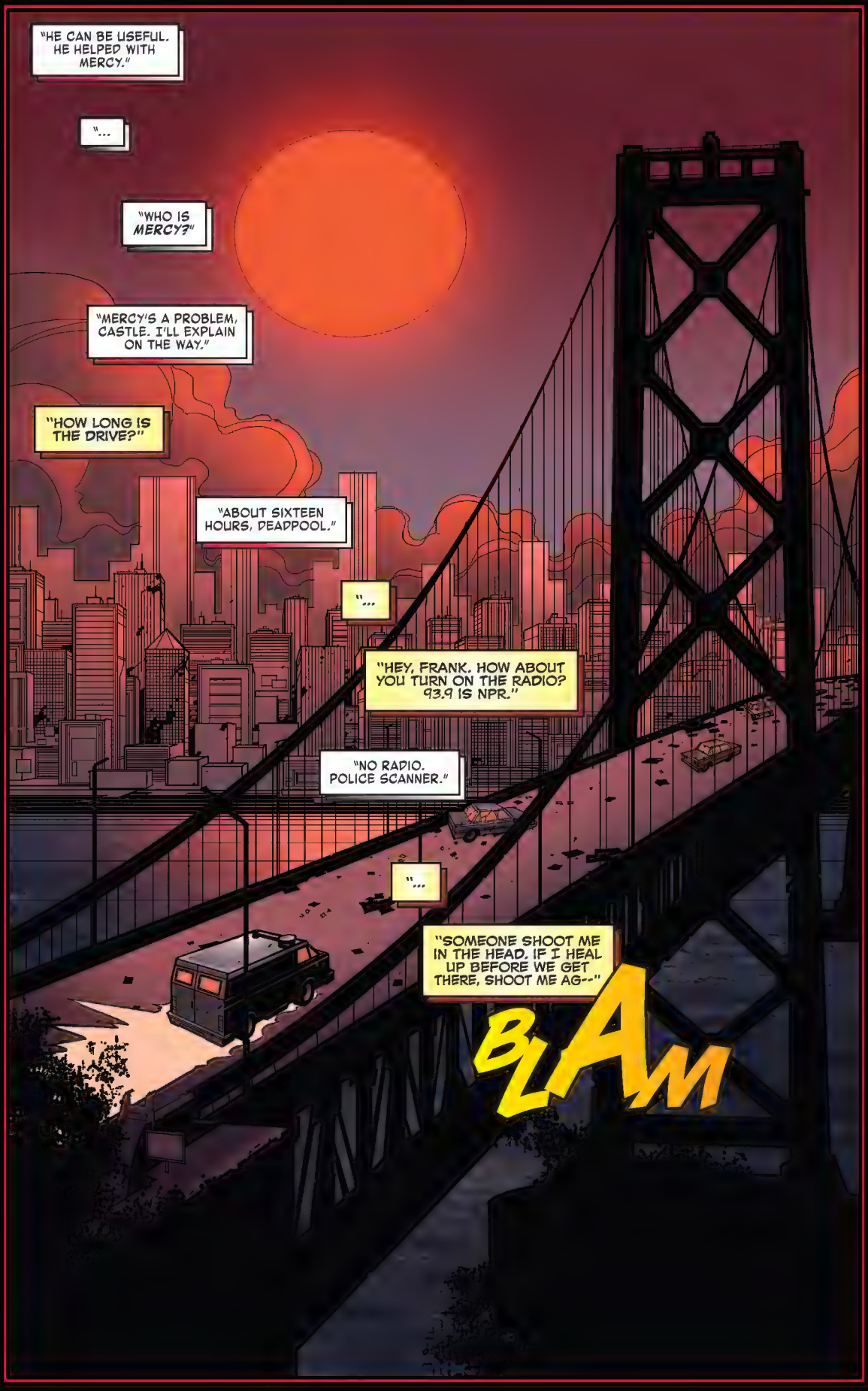
PUNISHER.

NOBIS EST DOMI
P'S PIZZA
HEY, GUYS.
YOU.
I FOUND YOUR GUYS.
YEARS LOOKING FOR THESE DIRTBAGS, AND YOU...YOU JUST...
YOU'RE WELCOME.

DEAD'S DEAD.
AND NOW YOU OWE ME ONE. A BIG ONE. JUST WAIT UNTIL MY NAME COMES OUT OF THAT HAT, FRANK. YOU'RE GOING TO LOVE IT.
LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE THE $%&*, $%&*.
...WHAT?

THAT PIZZA ANY GOOD?
JUST DECENT. NO SUCH THING AS A BAD SLICE IN NEW YORK CITY, THOUGH.
DON'T WE HAVE TO GET ROLLING, THOUGH? I DON'T WANT TO MISS OUR RIDE. I'M *DONE* WITH PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION.
I THINK THEY NEED A FEW MINUTES.
...IN THE *BATTLE VAN*???

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED?
YES, NO THANKS TO YOU. GET IN. I'LL TAKE US BACK TO THE SUB.
SUB'S GONE. WE'RE GOING SOMEWHERE ELSE.
BE CAREFUL WHERE YOU SIT.
I DON'T THINK YOU'RE GOING TO FIT THAT WAY.
...
I HOPE YOU BROUGHT A SPARE SHIRT.
PLEASE. I HAVE THE BODY OF A MAN HALF MY AGE. I'M SURE I LOOK BETTER NAKED THAN *YOU* DO.
...
NOT COOL.
I CAN HEAR YOU.
WHAT'S WRONG WITH *HIM?*
HE'S SICK. HE NEEDS TO REBOOT HIS BRAIN.
WHY DON'T WE JUST LEAVE HIM?


"HE CAN BE USEFUL. HE HELPED WITH MERCY."
"..."
"WHO IS *MERCY?*"
"MERCY'S A PROBLEM, CASTLE. I'LL EXPLAIN ON THE WAY."
"HOW LONG IS THE DRIVE?"
"ABOUT SIXTEEN HOURS, DEADPOOL."
"..."
"HEY, FRANK. HOW ABOUT YOU TURN ON THE RADIO? 93.9 IS NPR."
"NO RADIO. POLICE SCANNER."
"..."
"SOMEONE SHOOT ME IN THE HEAD. IF I HEAL UP BEFORE WE GET THERE, SHOOT ME AG--"
BLAM

NINETEEN

ON THE ROAD.
SAY, CAN I BORROW YOUR LIGHTER?
WHY DO YOU WANT IT?
BECAUSE I CAN KILL EVERY SINGLE ONE OF YOU WITH IT.

MY HEAD'S STILL KILLING ME AFTER WHAT HAPPENED IN NEW YORK. I THINK STARING INTO THE FLAME FOR A LITTLE WHILE WILL HELP CENTER ME.
HMPH.
FINE. CENTER AWAY. BUT WE'LL HAVE A PROBLEM IF YOU USE UP ALL MY BUTANE.
GOOD.
THIS IS ALL I NEED.
FIRST. START EMITTING GAMMA RADIATION. I'M NOT SURE THEY EVEN REMEMBER I CAN DO THAT. FOOLS. EVERY ONE OF THEM.
I CAN'T RADIATE ENOUGH TO DO ANY REAL DAMAGE. MOST OF THEM WON'T EVEN NOTICE.
BUT ROSS, NOW *ROSS* IS UNIQUELY SUSCEPTIBLE. HIS BIG, STUPID BODY'S LIKE A BIG, STUPID SPONGE, SUCKING IT IN.

UNDER ORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES, HE'D TURN INTO A HULK AND USE THE EXTRA BIT OF RADIATION AS FUEL.
IT'S GETTING STUFFY BACK HERE. YOU WANT TO TURN ON THE A.C., CASTLE?
NO A.C. THIS ISN'T A MINIVAN.
IT'S NOT?
CRAP IN A BUCKET.
BUT WE'RE SOMEWHERE ON I-80 IN PENNSYLVANIA, GOING 65 MILES PER HOUR. ROSS CAN'T CHANGE HERE. HE'D WRECK US.
SO, HE'LL JUST TRY TO SWEAT IT OUT. HE'S A MILITARY MAN. RIGHT NOW, HE'S THINKING HE SUFFERED WORSE THAN THIS WITH A SMILE BACK IN HIS SOLDIERING DAYS. THIS HEAT IS NOTHING COMPARED TO PATROL DUTY IN THE NEVADA DESERT, HE'S THINKING.
SO, HE PASSES OUT. NO ONE CARES. NO ONE REALLY EVEN NOTICES.
WHEN HE'S NOT THE HULK, HE'S JUST AN OLD MAN.
OLD MEN FALL ASLEEP ALL THE TIME.

THEY'RE ALL SO *STUPID*. I KNOW I'M NOT AT MY BEST AT THE MOMENT--MY BRAIN WAS *ALREADY* SPLIT IN TWO, AND IT'S EVEN WORSE NOW AFTER THAT *CREATURE* TRIED TO SIPHON AWAY MY INTELLECT BACK IN NEW YORK...
...BUT EVEN ON MY *WORST* DAY I'VE GOT AT LEAST A HUNDRED IQ POINTS ON ANY OF THEM.
TWO HUNDRED ON DEADPOOL.
WHO ASKS TO GET *SHOT* JUST TO AVOID A ROAD TRIP? TAKE AN AMBIEN, FOR GOODNESS' SAKE.
AND HIS BRAINS *STINK*, SPLATTERED ALL OVER THE VAN.
NO *CLASS*.
HOW DO THEY SEE ME? AS SOME SORT OF *MASCOT*?
CERTAINLY NOT AS ANYTHING *DANGEROUS*.
BUT THAT'S FINE.
IT MEANS THEY DON'T PAY *ATTENTION*.

THEY DON'T NOTICE WHEN I STEER THEM WHERE I WANT TO GO.
ANYONE HAVE A PROBLEM WITH STERNS PICKING THE FIRST NAME?
WHEN I MAKE THEIR CHOICES FOR THEM.
OF *COURSE* FRANK CASTLE WAS GOING TO WANT TO GO TO NEW YORK CITY. A FOOL COULD HAVE SEEN IT COMING.

TWO DOWN. THREE TO GO.
OH NO, NOT AGAIN.
WHAT DID THAT THING DO TO ME IN NEW YORK? MY BRAINS ARE LITERALLY LEAKING OUT OF MY SKULL.
I NEED TO MOVE THIS ALONG.
OOPS.

WHOOSH

PUT HIM OUT!!! THERE'S ENOUGH ORDNANCE BACK THERE TO BLOW US ALL TO HELL!
PUT HIM OUT WITH WHAT?
THERE'S AN EXTINGUISHER IN ONE OF THE BINS-- FIND IT!
I KNOW WHERE IT IS. I CATALOGUED EVERYTHING IN THIS VAN, JUST IN CASE.
IT'S IN THE BIN RIGHT UNDER WHERE I'M SITTING. BUT THAT'S THE LAST ONE FLASH WILL CHECK. IT'S HUMAN NATURE. HE'LL CHECK ALL THE OTHER ONES FIRST RATHER THAN INCONVENIENCE ME.
HUMAN NATURE. SO SILLY, BUT SO USEFUL.
I'LL HELP LOOK!
OOPS.

NOW, THE QUARTERBACK. THE WAR HERO. HE'S A TRICKY ONE.
THAT CREATURE HE'S HOSTING IS DEADLY, AND IT'S FAST. SO FAST.
BUT IT HATES FIRE, ENOUGH THAT IT WILL ABANDON ITS HOST TO GET AWAY FROM IT.
EEEEEEEEE!!!
WHICH LEAVES THE HOST VULNERABLE.

THESE SYMBIOTES HAVE A WEAKNESS TO MAGNESIUM. IT'S NOT COMMONLY KNOWN, BUT THEN--
--I DO MY RESEARCH, PARTICULARLY WHEN WE'RE TALKING ABOUT ALIEN MONSTERS THAT SPEND FAR TOO MUCH TIME IN DISTRESSINGLY CLOSE PROXIMITY TO ME.
MORE COMMONLY KNOWN-- ROAD FLARES CONTAIN MAGNESIUM. THEY'RE JUST FULL OF THE STUFF.
AS I SAID. VULNERABLE.
THREE DOWN.
TWO TO GO.

WELL, THREE TO GO, REALLY. BUT THE LAST ONE'S NOT HERE.
MERCY.
SHE'S THE MOST DANGEROUS ONE OF ALL.
AND NOT JUST BECAUSE SHE'S POWERFUL--ALTHOUGH SHE IS--INSANELY SO.
IT'S BECAUSE OF WHAT SHE SEES.
SHE CAN SEE... INSIDE ME. SHE KNOWS THE TRUTH.
I DON'T LIKE THAT. NOT AT ALL.

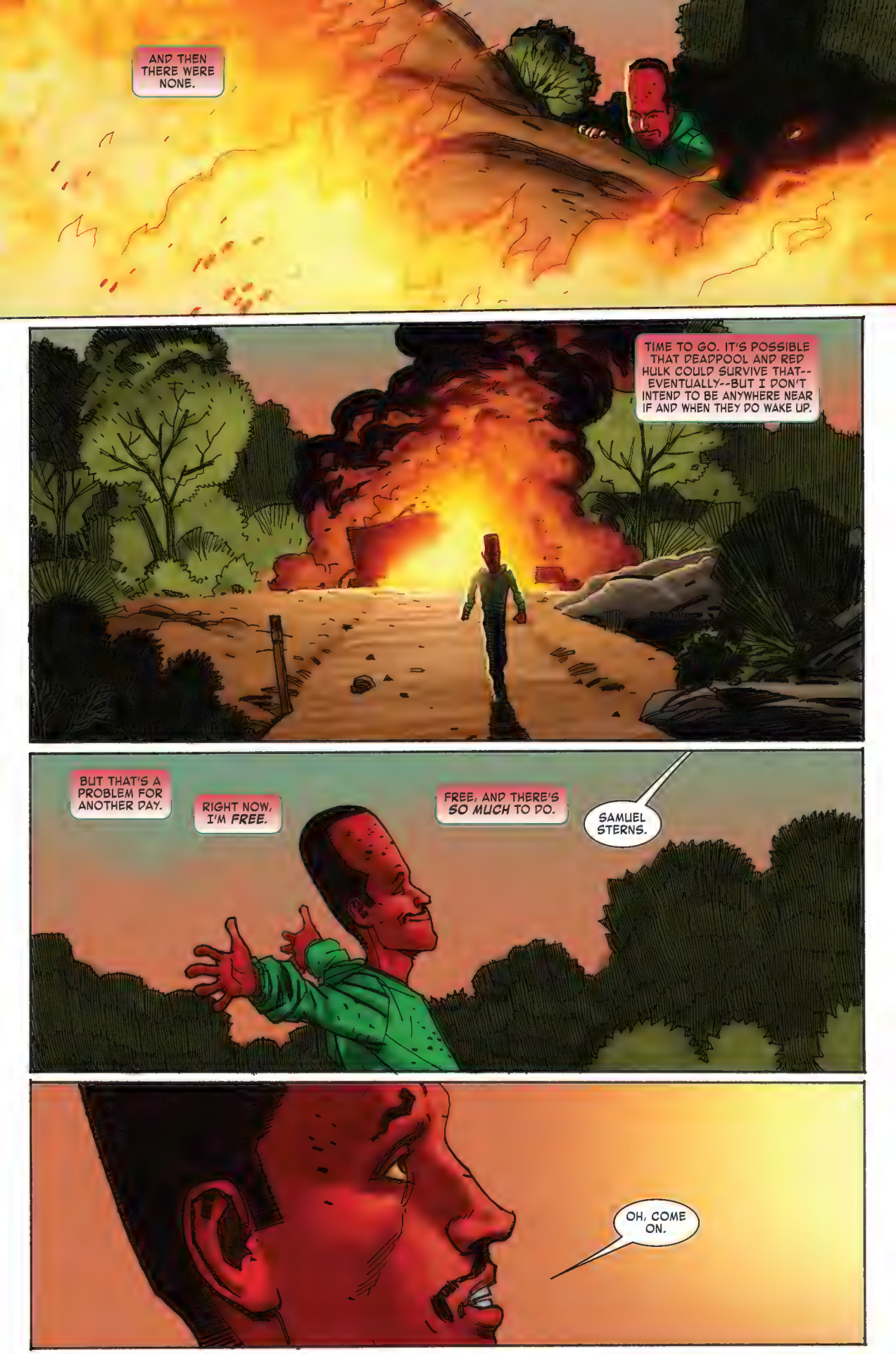
EVERYTHING I'VE BEEN DOING RECENTLY HAS BEEN ABOUT MERCY.
PUT THE PUNISHER IN NEW YORK CITY, LET HIM LOOSE WITH THE REST OF THE KILLERS ON THIS TEAM--I ASSUMED THAT WOULD GENERATE ENOUGH DEATH TO GET MERCY INTERESTED.
AND ONCE I HAD HER UNLEASHED IN ONE OF THE MOST DENSELY POPULATED CITIES IN THE WORLD, THE NEXT STEP WAS BOUND TO REVEAL ITSELF.
AND SO IT DID.
I'VE ALWAYS BEEN A GIFTED IMPROVISER. I SOMETIMES THINK THAT I COULD HAVE BEEN A JAZZ MUSICIAN IN ANOTHER LIFE.
NOT THAT I WANT ANOTHER LIFE. I'M *EXACTLY* WHERE I WANT TO BE.
IN ANY CASE, TOSS A SURPRISE ALIEN INVASION INTO ANY PLAN AND THINGS TEND TO GET INTERESTING.
BRING THE SUB TO THE SURFACE, LET MERCY OUT... I KNEW *JUST* HOW IT WAS GOING TO WORK.
THEY WERE *ALL* GOING TO DIE, MERCY INCLUDED.

THEN THINGS BECAME... COMPLICATED.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT SHE WAS--PART OF THE ALIEN INVASION--BUT SHE WANTED MY BRAIN...AND SHE ALMOST GOT IT.
I WAS FORCED TO RECALIBRATE. TO IMPROVISE.
WHICH, IN THIS CASE, SIMPLY MEANT SURVIVING LONG ENOUGH TO REPAIR THE DAMAGE TO MY MIND THROUGH A CONNECTION TO MY SECOND BRAIN, STORED ONLINE, WHICH I STILL HAVE YET TO FULLY ACHIEVE.
(I HAVE A NUMBER OF BRAINS. IT'S A POINT OF PRIDE.)
I'M NOT ONE HUNDRED PERCENT YET. I CAN FEEL IT. STILL, I'M SMARTER THAN THESE FOOLS, BUT THEN, I'M ALSO SMARTER THAN A FIRE HYDRANT.
I LET THEM TAKE ME OUT OF THE CITY--I NEEDED TO GET AS FAR AWAY FROM MERCY AS I COULD.
SO THEY SURVIVED, ALAS, BUT I DID AS WELL. THERE WERE WORSE OUTCOMES.
AND IF THERE'S ONE THING I'VE LEARNED IN MY LONG, LONG CAREER, IT IS THIS:

FORTUNE FAVORS THE PREPARED MIND.
STOP, FRANK! WE'VE GOT TO GET OUT!
CAN'T. NOT HERE. IF THE VAN GOES UP IT'LL TAKE OUT TWENTY OTHER CARS.
THERE.
BRACE YOURSELF. NO SEATBELTS EITHER.
WHAT DOES THIS STUPID VAN HAVE?
GRENADES. MAYBE TOO MANY. SO BRACE YOURSELF.
CRRASHH

NNNGH. FRANK, WE HAVE TO--
GO.
THEY'RE... }COUGH{ }COUGH{ THEY'RE STILL IN THERE! YOU'VE GOT TO HELP THEM!
TINK

BOOOM!!


AND THEN THERE WERE NONE.
TIME TO GO. IT'S POSSIBLE THAT DEADPOOL AND RED HULK COULD SURVIVE THAT--EVENTUALLY--BUT I DON'T INTEND TO BE ANYWHERE NEAR IF AND WHEN THEY DO WAKE UP.
BUT THAT'S A PROBLEM FOR ANOTHER DAY.
RIGHT NOW, I'M *FREE.*
FREE, AND THERE'S *SO MUCH* TO DO.
SAMUEL STERNS.
OH, COME ON.

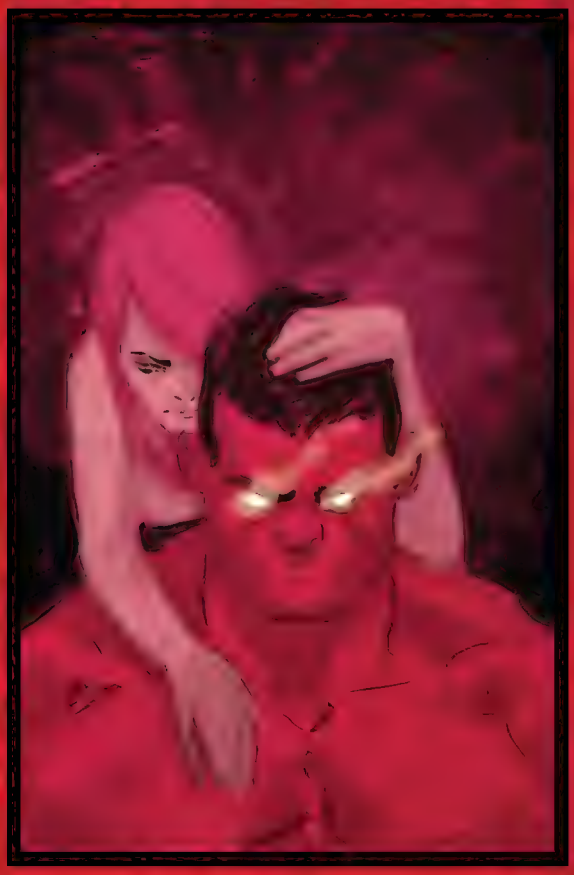
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE, SAMUEL STERNS?
SEE, THIS IS THE PROBLEM.
I CAN GET THE OTHERS, BUT MERCY'S STILL OUT THERE.
SHE'S *INTERESTED* IN ME, AND AS FAR AS I KNOW, THAT MEANS THERE'S NOWHERE I CAN HIDE.
MAYBE I NEED TO THINK THIS THROUGH.

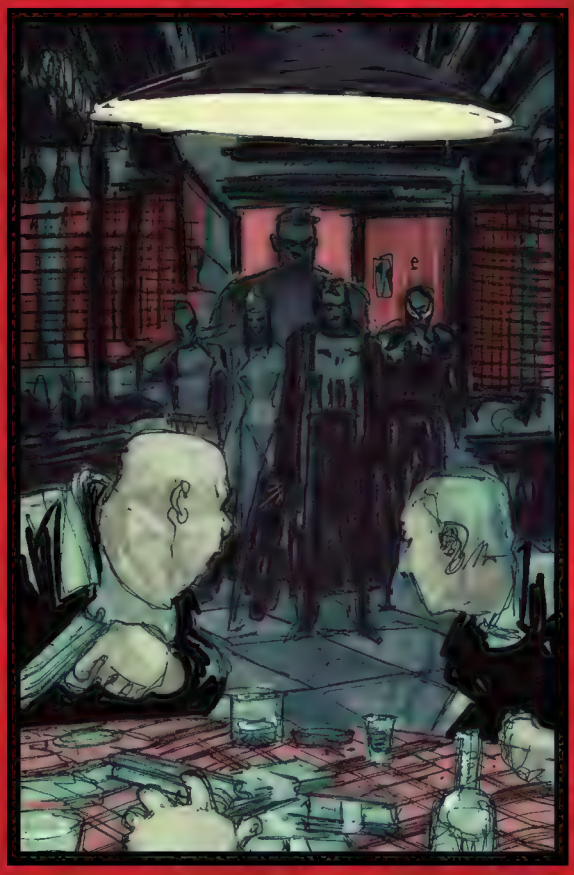
I KILL THEM, THEN MERCY KILLS ME.
BUT, EVEN *THAT* ISN'T THE PROBLEM. NOT REALLY.
THE *REAL* PROBLEM IS THAT I AM ONE THING, AND *ONLY* ONE THING. *MY MIND.*
AND RIGHT NOW, MY MIND IS DRIPPING DOWN MY SHIRT.
I CAN MAKE ALL THE PLANS I LIKE, BUT CAN I *TRUST* THEM?
WHO KNOWS WHAT I'M MISSING? WHO KNOWS WHAT VARIABLES I'M FAILING TO SEE?
MAYBE I'M WRONG ABOUT MAGNESIUM. MAYBE ROSS MAKES CASTLE PULL OVER. MAYBE THE VAN BLOWS UP WHILE I'M STILL INSIDE.
MAYBE *I'M* THE IDIOT.

ALL CENTERED, STERNS?
I THINK SO, YES.
NEW AGE HIPPIE CRAP.
MAYBE IT'S BETTER TO BE A LIVING IDIOT THAN A DEAD GENIUS.
AN IDEA WILL PRESENT ITSELF. IT ALWAYS DOES.
AND BESIDES...
...EVERY TEAM NEEDS A LEADER.

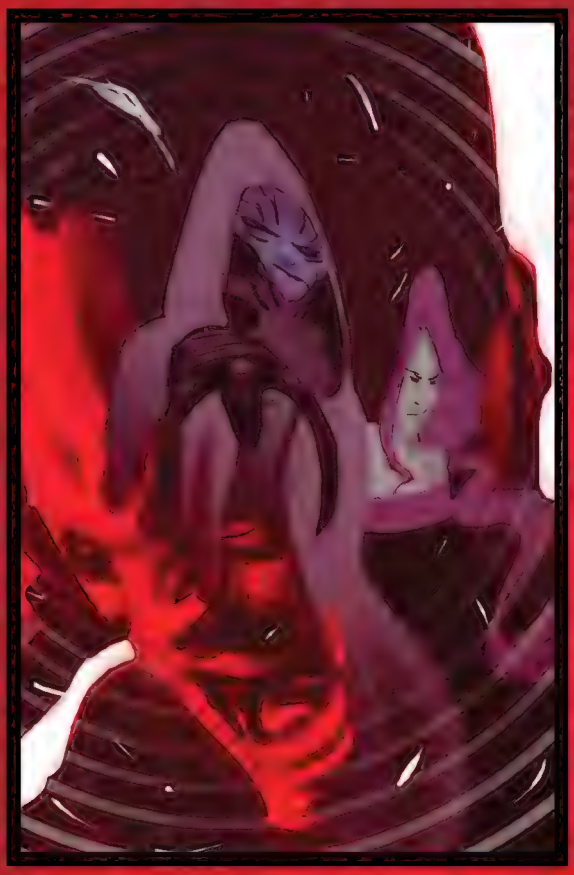
PAGURO FAMILY CHARACTER DESIGNS BY JEFTE PALO

NOBILI FAMILY CHARACTER DESIGNS BY JEFTE PALO





COVER CONCEPTS BY JULIAN TOTINO TEDESCO



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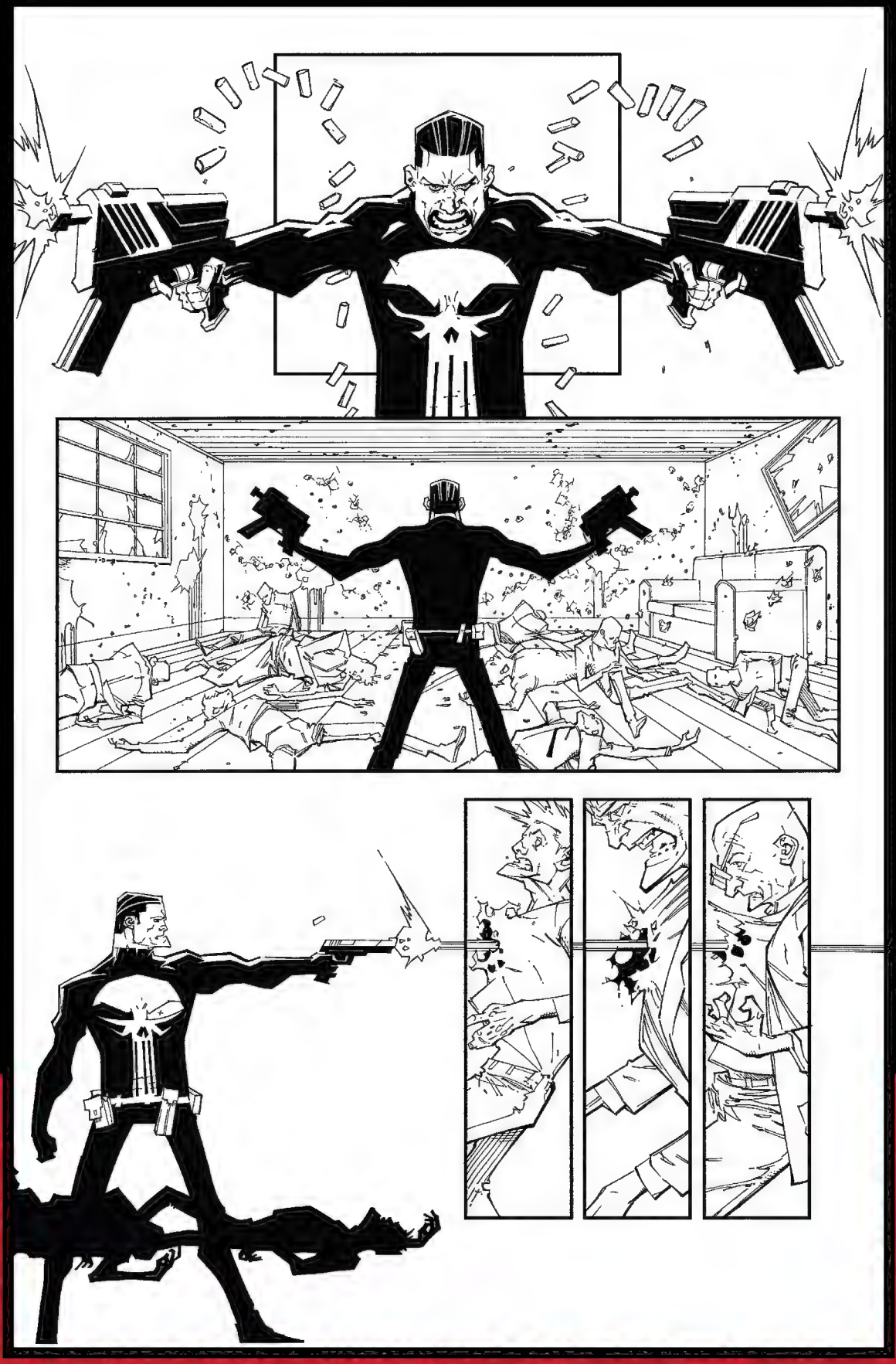
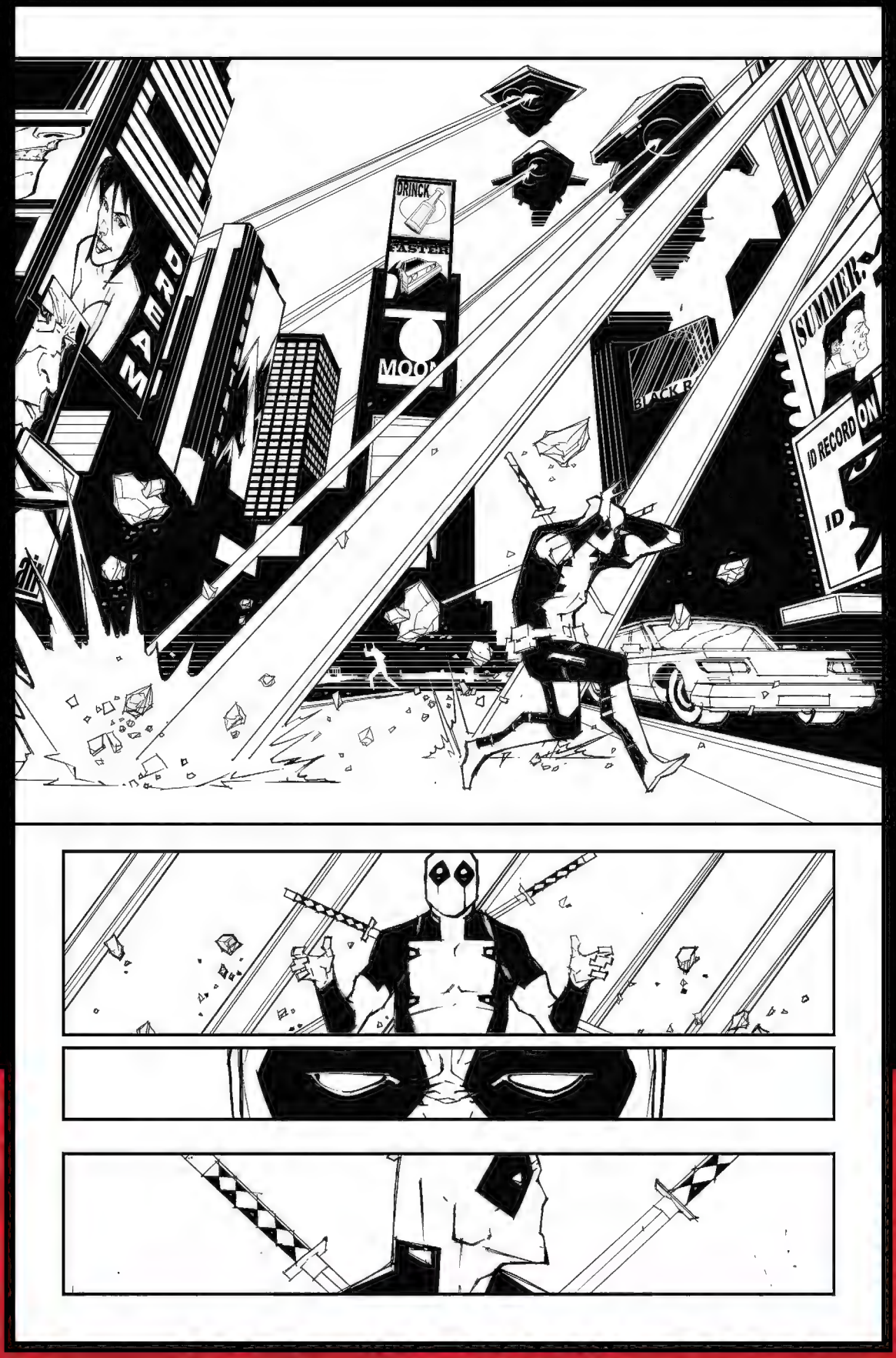


#14, PAGE 11 ARTWORK BY JEFTE PALO



#15, PAGE 16 ARTWORK BY JEFTE PALO

#16, PAGE 11 ARTWORK BY JEFTE PALO

#17, PAGE 16 ARTWORK BY JEFTE PALO

#17, PAGE 18 ARTWORK BY JEFTE PALO

"Soule gets who these characters are and what they're about."
– WeeklyComicBookReview.com

WHILE THE AVENGERS ARE AWAY, THE THUNDERBOLTS STRIKE!

Venom goes looking for answers when he confronts the most mysterious, and perhaps most powerful of General Ross' Thunderbolts team, the deadly beautiful Mercy. Then, the Punisher takes the lead as the T-Bolts go on a mission to wipe out the New York mafia's most powerful family, and Deadpool goes out for a slice of pizza. But the mission goes south when Thanos' hordes descend from space and one of the Black Order sets her sights on the Red Leader. A little alien invasion won't force the Punisher to abandon mission, but can he succeed with a compromised team in a city under siege? And will Deadpool get that pizza?

Collecting *Thunderbolts #13-19* — written by Charles Soule; and illustrated by Phil Noto, Jefte Palo and Gabriel Hernandez Walta.

MARVEL